

# PASSION SUNDAY



GOSPEL: JOHN 8:45–59

*In what spirit we must hear and receive the words of our superiors*

## 21.1 First Point

With good reason Jesus Christ complains in today's Gospel that the Jews did not believe his words,<sup>1</sup> in spite of the fact that he told them nothing but the truth and spoke to them as his Father enjoined him to do,<sup>2</sup> for this was a sign that they did not recognize him as the Son of God.

The same complaint can often be made about many religious people who lack confidence in their superiors because they do not consider them as holding God's place. As a result, they do not profit by the advice given them and do not carry out faithfully what they have been commanded.

To remedy this defect, which can have very serious consequences, all those who live under the direction of a superior must believe that his words are the words of God. Jesus Christ requires this in the holy Gospel when he says, in the person of the Apostles to all those who guide others, whoever hears you, hears me.<sup>3</sup> We ought to be firmly convinced that superiors are the ministers of Jesus Christ, that God is in them and causes them to speak, and that the words of our superiors are the truth that they have learned from God. Is it not true that if you had always had such dispositions, you would have believed with simplicity all that your superiors said to you and would never have hesitated a single moment over following their advice and obeying their commands? Admit that if you committed any faults in their regard, it was only because you did not consider God in them and did not hear their words as those of God.

## 21.2 Second Point

Not only ought religious people to believe the words of their superiors, they ought likewise to listen to them with respect and humility in the same dispositions with which wellborn children listen to their parents' voice. Then Jesus Christ would not have to make to them the same reproach that he addresses to the Jews in today's Gospel, namely, that they do not listen to his words because they are not born of God. He who is born of God, says our Lord, hears the words of God.<sup>4</sup>

If religious possess the Spirit of God within them, they will gladly listen to the words of their superiors, because they will recognize the language as that of God. They will be convinced that God's truth is in their superiors and that they do not speak by their own initiative but by the impulse of the Spirit of God,<sup>5</sup> to whom in them they ought to listen, as Jesus Christ, our Lord, says.

Is this how you listen to your superiors? Do you not at times examine critically what they tell you? Do you not entertain thoughts contrary to what they advise or command you? If so, you are insulting God in their person.

## 21.3 Third Point

You are also obliged to practice with docility the advice and the orders of your superiors, for, as Saint John says, we show that we truly know God if we keep his commandments.<sup>6</sup> At the same time, the chief witness you can give that you recognize as your superior the one who commands you is that you carry out promptly and exactly not only everything you are ordered but everything you are told, even simple counsels.

Just as the one who pretends to know God but does not observe his commandments is a liar and the truth is not in him,<sup>7</sup> as Saint John adds, so too the one who does not do everything his superior tells him and shows by his conduct that although he may say that the one who speaks to him is, in fact, his superior, he does not recognize him as such, for what makes known that he is truly united with him in that role and dependent on him is whether he does what his superior tells him. So too, according to this holy Apostle, what proves that we are in God is whether we keep his words.<sup>8</sup>

Judge from this how you ought to act with regard to what your superior tells you to do.

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1. Jn 8:46

4. Jn 8:47

6. 1 Jn 2:3

2. Jn 7:16

5. Lk 10:16;

7. 1 Jn 2:4

3. Lk 10:16

see 2 Pt 1:21

8. 1 Jn 2:5

