

Chapter 7JESUS CHRIST, REVEALING THE FATHER*The Only Begotten Son, witness of the Father*

We have addressed some points connected to the identity of Jesus Christ as “Son of God”, now we will consider Jesus as to how His person manifests something of the Father. In other words, after having discussed the relationship of Jesus with his Father, we focus our attention in the relationship of Jesus with us, that is to say, his mission to reveal the Father to us. All His being is a reflection of the love of the Father, and Christian piety sees this especially reflected in the Heart of the Son.

Jesus is the presence of the eternal itself in this world. He is the witness of God, through whom the intangible has become tangible, the distant has drawn near. In the unconditional devotion of Himself to men, the meaning of the world is present before us; it vouchsafes itself to us as love that loves even me and makes life worth living.<sup>1</sup>

This revelation of God, as we have been saying, becomes evident in the person of Jesus (cf. Col. 1:15). The ineffable and mysterious countenance of the Father is revealed in the Son through the Son’s words and works, which proclaim what is more intimate to God: His love, His wisdom, His beauty, His plan for salvation (cf. 1 Jn. 4:8).

The proclamation that Jesus makes of the love of God radiates from His own being because He was intimately united with God, His Father. The unity of His being with that of the Father (ontological union) explains the perfect communion of knowledge. Jesus knows the Father as no other human being is able to know Him. He knows Him because He is in Him: the communion of knowing is at the same time communion in being.<sup>2</sup>

This is why for us the true knowledge of God proceeds from the knowledge of the Son, because he who sees the Son sees the Father. It is a revelation that is a gift. Only those to whom Jesus wishes to reveal the Father to, get to know the Father. (cf. Mt. 11:27; Lk. 10:22; Jn. 1:18; 6:46; 1 Tim. 6:16; 1 Jn.4:12).

*Jesus Christ, image of God*

“Truly with you God is hidden” (Is. 45:15). These are the words the prophet Isaiah used to speak to God. But the New Testament tells of an unheard of event. The person of the Father, His face that had been hidden, is revealed in the person of Jesus Christ: “He is the image of the invisible God” (Col 1:15). The glory of God appears in the face of Christ ( 2 Cor. 4:6), in such a way that

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<sup>1</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 79

<sup>2</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger – Benedict XVI, *Jesus of Nazareth*, 340

“whoever has seen me, says Jesus, has seen the Father” (Jn. 14:9). “In order to bring man back to the Father’s face, we read in the *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, Jesus not only had to take on the face of man, but He had to “burden” Himself with the face of sin”<sup>3</sup>.

Jesus revealed to us the mystery of God: He, the Son, made us know the Father who is in Heaven, and gave us the Holy Spirit, the Love of the Father and of the Son. Christian theology synthesizes the truth of God with this expression: only one substance in three persons. God is not solitude, but perfect communion. For this reason the human person, the image of God, realizes himself or herself in love, which is a sincere gift of self.<sup>4</sup>

In reference to the text of St John Benedict XVI emphasizes this idea: “God Himself is eternal and infinite Love”. The word that summarizes all revelation is this: “God is Love” (1 Jn. 4: 8,16): and love is always a mystery, a reality that surpasses reason without contradicting it, and more than that, exalts its possibilities.

#### *The Son, expression of the Wisdom of God*

The apostle St. Paul applies to Jesus what the Old Testament said about Wisdom, wisdom is described as an aura of the might of God; a pure effusion of the glory of the Almighty; the refulgence of eternal light; the spotless mirror of the activity of God; and the image of His goodness (cf. Wis. 7:25-26). The author of the letter to the Hebrews finds in Jesus the *refulgence of the Glory of the Father, the very imprint of His being* (cf. Heb. 1:3).

The glory of God is synonym with beauty, a beauty that Jesus reveals on the Cross, a beauty that is not a simple harmony of shapes, because even the most beautiful of men is always, mysteriously, one with an appearance that does not attract us to him, scorned and avoided by men, before him they hide their faces (cf. Is 53:2).

Benedict XVI talks about this beauty in his Apostolic Exhortation, *Sacramentum Caritatis*, where he says beauty is not mere aestheticism, but the concrete way in which the truth of God’s love encounters us, attracts us, and delights in us, enabling us to emerge from ourselves and drawing us to our true vocation, which is love. “Here the splendor of God’s glory surpasses all worldly beauty. The truest beauty is the love of God, who definitively revealed Himself to us in the paschal mystery” (SC 35).

#### *The supreme manifestation of God in the Cross of the Apostolate*

The gospels present to us the life of Jesus Christ as a life opened “for us” that finds its summit and culmination in the wound of His Heart, pierced by the lance. The heart of the crucified Christ is the

<sup>3</sup> John Paul II, *Novo Millennio Ineunte*, 25.

<sup>4</sup> Benedict XVI, *Angelus*, May 22, 2005.

place of encounter of God with man. Jesus' outstretched arms are the gesture of intercessory prayer, a gesture of embrace, of full and undivided brotherliness,<sup>5</sup> they reveal to us His total surrender.

The extended arms of the Cross are, in the spiritual experience of Concepcion Cabrera, the link of intimacy between brothers, between those who want to unite themselves to the heart of Christ. The Cross of the Apostolate floats, flies in the heavenly space, carrying on it the heart of Christ; this is why we are not surprised by the words that Concepcion used to invite her spiritual director:

I invite you to fly, yes, let us fly inside our Cross of the Apostolate, for there is our Jesus, our Life, our Treasure... Isn't that what Jesus' cross with arms outstretched mean for us? (AC 2,86) I have always had a special inclination to see the sky, this space studded with stars and clouds and constellations<sup>6</sup> (AC 2,100).

When we interpret the cross symbolically, its outstretched arms show that in this Christian position of prayer coincide the indivisibility of worship and brotherliness, the glorification of God and service to mankind.

In other words, the mystical experience is not confined to the person, rather, and in a natural way, it extends out to the community. Concepcion's cry, pronounced a little before the vision of the Cross of the Apostolate, "Jesus savior of mankind, save them!" manifests this reality; this is a prayer of intercession.

Concepcion experienced a profound apostolic zeal for the salvation of all mankind; her wish was to fill the hours of the day "with the purest acts of love, of sacrifice, of charity to her neighbor, of forgetting herself, of care and concern for the souls". Frequently she would express her longing "That every breath of mine say to you, "Jesus Savior of mankind, save them", and this by day and night" (AC 22,262)

This is how Concepcion expresses what she saw in the humble condition of the *flesh* Heart of Jesus the man: the almightiness and dominion of God. On the cross, says Benedict XVI, God's highest power is demonstrated not through force, but only through the freedom of love.<sup>7</sup>

It thereby expresses accurately the whole point of the Christian image of God: the tension between absolute power and absolute love, absolute distance and absolute proximity, between absolute being and direct affinity with the most human side of humanity.<sup>8</sup>

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<sup>5</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 252

<sup>6</sup> This studded sky Concepcion is talking about is the one she had seen at the "haciendas".

<sup>7</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 150

<sup>8</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *Introduction*, 150

*To see the Father in the Son*

The question arises: How can we see Christ, and see Him in such a way that at the same time we can see the Father? This question considers the two goals of the vision: to see Jesus and to see the Father. The answer is given to us in the passage of the gospel of John in which some Greek men approach Philip and Andrew in order to make a petition “we want to see Jesus” (Jn. 12:20). We see in that request the petition of Christians from all ages.

Andrew and Philip went to tell Jesus and Jesus responded something completely unexpected “unless a grain of wheat falls to the ground and dies, it remains just a grain of wheat; but if it dies, it produces much fruit”. (Jn. 12:24)

These words, explains Benedict XVI,<sup>9</sup> can be interpreted in the sense that the world of the “Greeks”, the world of the gentiles in general, shall see Jesus; but not in the earthly, historical life, they shall see Him according to the flesh (Cf. 2 Cor. 5:16), they shall see Him within the scope of His passion, that is to say, not in one single geographic locality, but on the Cross, when He is lifted up from the earth and draws everyone to Himself (Cf. Jn. 12:32).

The Cross is the place from which and in which Jesus can be seen. The verb “lifted up” includes the mystery of Easter: lifted up on the Cross and exulted in His resurrection. And this resurrection announces a new presence of Jesus with the strength of the Holy Spirit, and so a new way of “seeing” which happens within the faith is announced.

The concept of “seeing” obtains a new dynamic. “Seeing” takes place when we go inside the Passion of Jesus, that is to say, through a way of living we call “following”. This is where you also see the Father. And so the words of the prophet quoted by John at the end of the Passion narrative: “they will look upon him whom they have pierced” (Jn 19:37; cf. Zech. 12:10) attain their greatness.

To see Jesus and in Him at the same time to see the Father is an act of surrender of one’s whole life, it is a life of faith. He who is attached to his own life, will lose it; he who forsakes his own life in the world will preserve it for a life without end. “Whoever serves me must follow me, where I am, there also will my servant be” (Jn 12:26). The act of following is to live in the place where Jesus is, and this place is the cross, a cross that includes the paschal mystery of death and resurrection, and therefore a cross where you can also find His glory.

Saint Gregory of Nyssa commented that we can only encounter God as long as we follow Jesus; that we can only see Him in the way we follow Jesus<sup>10</sup>, all this simply because Jesus can see the countenance of God, and on His face bring to light the glory of God (2 Cor 4:6)

<sup>9</sup> Cf. J. Ratzinger, *On the Way*, 15-16

<sup>10</sup> Gregory of Nyssa, *Life of Moses*, (252 in the Spanish edition)

### *Consequences*

The principle of salvation follows from the knowledge of the Son, since it fosters our adherence to the Father through Faith<sup>11</sup> in a commitment that brings us into the dynamic of God's plan. God, when He sent His Son into the world, built a new relationship with the world, in such a way that when the Son returns to the glory of the Father having fulfilled His mission, He'll bring with Him all of mankind. He returns to the Father with those who belong to Him, because they were a gift of the Father; and where Jesus is, they also are with Him (cf. Jn. 17:24).

Confronted with this manifestation of the love of God, we can't, like the angel told the disciples the day of the Ascension of the Lord, remain looking at the sky, ignoring the implications of our faith in Jesus Christ as Son of God.<sup>12</sup> Jesus is sent by the Father<sup>13</sup> but we are also sent by Jesus Christ: "As the Father has sent me, so I have also sent you" (Jn. 13:20; cf. 17:18, 20:21). The concept of "sent", like the concept of "son" is used for the being who "comes from" and "is for"; it is conceived as an openness without reservation, towards God our Father and mankind as our brothers and sisters. Faith – says Benedict XVI on his visit to Brazil - is a journey led by the Holy Spirit which can be summed up in two words: conversion and discipleship. In the Christian tradition, these two key words clearly indicate that faith in Christ implies a way of living based on the twofold command to love God and neighbor – and they also express life's social dimension.<sup>14</sup>

When Saint John gives the character of mission to Christian life, the words "to come from" and "to go to" are understood in reference to others: we come from God in order to go to others. In this way it becomes evident how the true to self individual, existentially united to God, is whoever lets go of his selfishness. His/her life begins when he/she assumes the death of the grain of wheat, when his/her life is lived as an offering, when we are open, when we renounce ourselves. Life is born out of death. "Whoever loves his life loses it and whoever hates his life in this world will preserve it for eternal life" (Jn 12:25, cf. Mk 8:35)

And so, the basic Christian decision, like we have mentioned before, implies to stop centering everything around ourselves and uniting ourselves to Jesus Christ's life. To take up the cross means to leave behind the confinement that crucifies man, in order to come out of yourself, so you can follow in the footsteps of the Crucified and in order to live for others.

Now we can summarize what we've said so far about the second article of our faith "I believe in Jesus Christ, His only Son, our Lord". When we merge the word Christ and the name Jesus a unity between the being and the actions of Jesus the person is implied. Jesus is one with His mission; His goal and His being are inseparable. In the same way the joining of the terms Christ and

<sup>11</sup> Cf. Ch. A. Bernard, *Spiritual Theology*, (108 in the Spanish edition)

<sup>12</sup> We took views from *Introduction to Christianity*, in various places

<sup>13</sup> The verb "to send" appears 43 times in the gospel of John.

<sup>14</sup> Benedict XVI, *Address to the Bishops in Brazil*: May 11, 2007

Son reveal the substantial identity of the person with God: Jesus is the Son of God, a being who lives in constant reference to God His Father and at the same time, a being who is for others.

This reference of Jesus and His Father does not mean exclusivity, rather it takes us to that same relationship with God; He wants mankind to present itself before Him in the same way, and “in Him” and “with Him” we dare to call God Father. There should not be any distance between us and God, we are now invited to enter into that intimacy that becomes a reality in Jesus.

In the scope of the living experience, we see the revealed truth in the image of the Cross of the Apostolate. The Heart of Christ, found in the center of the arms of the Cross, allows us to understand the core of the revelation in our lives: God isn’t infinite solitude, but communion of light and love, life given and received.

In His light we discover that a person’s life can’t be a blind impulse, whose origin or goal we can’t determine. Everything comes from the love of the Creator, everything has been renewed by the merciful love of the Father who shows to us the heart of Christ, everything is directed towards the full and definitive manifestation of the love of God, the love of the Holy Spirit who has made His home inside the wounded heart of Christ.<sup>15</sup>

Once we have considered this article of our faith in Christ, the son of God, we turn our attention to the other aspects of the mystery of Christ as expressed in the symbol of the Apostles: His incarnation, His death and His resurrection.

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<sup>15</sup> Cf. Ch.A. Bernard, *Spiritual theology*, (129 in the Spanish edition)