

Ten After Ten Session 28: Jesus' Public Life Continued...

551 From the beginning of his public life Jesus chose certain men, twelve in number, to be with him and to participate in his mission. He gives the Twelve a share in his authority and “sent them out to preach the kingdom of God and to heal.” They remain associated forever with Christ’s kingdom, for through them he directs the Church.

552 Simon Peter holds the first place in the college of the Twelve; Jesus entrusted a unique mission to him. Through a revelation from the Father, Peter had confessed: “You are the Christ, the Son of the living God.” Our Lord then declared to him: “You are Peter, and on this rock I will build my Church, and the gates of Hades will not prevail against it.” Christ, the “living stone,” thus assures his Church, built on Peter, of victory over the powers of death. Because of the faith he confessed Peter will remain the unshakeable rock of the Church. His mission will be to keep this faith from every lapse and to strengthen his brothers in it.

553 Jesus entrusted a specific authority to Peter: “I will give you the keys of the kingdom of heaven, and whatever you bind on earth shall be bound in heaven, and whatever you loose on earth shall be loosed in heaven.” The power of the keys designates authority to govern the house of God, which is the Church... the power to “bind and loose” connotes the authority to absolve sins, to pronounce doctrinal judgments, and to make disciplinary decisions in the Church. Jesus entrusted this authority to the Church through the ministry of the apostles and in particular through the ministry of Peter, the only one to whom he specifically entrusted the keys of the kingdom.

554 From the day Peter confessed that Jesus is the Christ, the Son of the living God, the Master “began to show his disciples that he must go to Jerusalem and suffer many things... and be killed, and on the third day be raised.” Peter scorns this prediction, nor do the others understand it any better than he. In this context the mysterious episode of Jesus’ Transfiguration takes place on a high mountain, before three witnesses chosen by himself: Peter, James, and John. Jesus’ face and clothes become dazzling with light, and Moses and Elijah appear, speaking “of his departure, which he was to accomplish at Jerusalem.”

555 For a moment Jesus discloses his divine glory, confirming Peter’s confession. He also reveals that he will have to go by the way of the cross at Jerusalem in order to “enter into his glory.” Moses and Elijah had seen God’s glory on the Mountain; the Law and the Prophets had announced the Messiah’s sufferings. Christ’s Passion is the will of the Father: the Son acts as God’s servant; the cloud indicates the presence of the Holy Spirit. The whole Trinity appeared: the Father in the voice; the Son in the man; the Spirit in the shining cloud.

556 On the threshold of the public life: the baptism; on the threshold of the Passover: the Transfiguration... The Transfiguration gives us a foretaste of Christ’s glorious coming, when he will change our lowly body to be like his glorious body. But it also recalls that it is through many persecutions that we must enter the kingdom of God.

557 “When the days drew near for him to be taken up [Jesus] set his face to go to Jerusalem.” By this decision he indicated that he was going up to Jerusalem prepared to die there.

558 Jesus recalls the martyrdom of the prophets who had been put to death in Jerusalem. Nevertheless he persists in calling Jerusalem to gather around him: “How often would I have gathered your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, and you would not!” When Jerusalem comes into view he weeps over her and expresses once again his heart’s desire: “Would that even today you knew the things that make for peace! But now they are hid from your eyes.”

559 Although Jesus had always refused popular attempts to make him king, he chooses the time and prepares the details for his messianic entry into the city of “his father David.” Acclaimed as son of David, as the one who brings salvation (Hosanna means “Save!” or “Give salvation!”), the “King of glory” enters his City riding on an ass. Jesus conquers the Daughter of Zion, a figure of his Church, neither by ruse nor by violence, but by the humility that bears witness to the truth. And so the subjects of his kingdom on that day are children and God’s poor, who acclaim him as had the angels when they announced him to the shepherds... “Blessed be he who comes in the name of the LORD.”

560 Jesus’ entry into Jerusalem manifested the coming of the kingdom that the King–Messiah was going to accomplish by the Passover of his Death and Resurrection. It is with the celebration of that entry on Palm Sunday that the Church’s liturgy solemnly opens Holy Week.