

# **BIBLICAL PAGES**

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## **Jesus, a man of His time and space, shows us our true and full humanity**

### **Lectio n° 1**

#### **Introduction**

Before dealing with the different aspects of Jesus' humanity, I would like to say a few words as a 'foreword', so that you may fully understand where the eight steps of the yearly path will lead you.

First of all, let us deal with the title:

- "*Jesus, a man of His time and space...*"

Jesus, the Son of God, takes our very flesh and comes into the world as a man, going through all the phases of man's life, from being a baby to a grown-up. This humanity which He takes on Himself is – matter-of-factly – the 'space' in which He lives, His 'environment', His experience, His relations, His heritage. It is a space involving all of His person and all of His life. This space allows a twofold movement: from the human to the divine; and from the divine to the human.

- "*...shows us our true and full humanity*"

It is the place / space where we can encounter God and discover our true humanity. Therefore we must open the door of our hearts to it.

The method to understand the text is Lectio Divina, a 'tool' thanks to which we can let ourselves be pervaded by 'Jesus' space'. The monks call this method 'divine lecture', a meditation of the Scriptures enabling us to encounter God and to be encountered by Him. Or, in other words, by reading we can be 'read' and fulfilled by Him.

The whole Scripture contains references to 'Jesus' space': each and every of its books refer to Him, who is the Verb made flesh, the Sacrament of man's encounter with God. All the books of the Bible, considered as a whole, say His name.

#### **To enter...**

"The Verb was made flesh and dwelt among us" (Jn 1:14). The event of God's 'condescension', leading Him to become a creature, is at the core of the paradox of Christian faith. But what does it mean that the Verb was made flesh?

‘To be made flesh’ does not mean to put on a body as if it were a garment, to put on a bodily shell, but rather to become a real man: it denotes that God, according to Christian revelation, reveals Himself to man and encounters him thanks to Jesus Christ’s humanity. God takes on Himself the whole of humanity, by living the human existence from its conception to death. We may therefore say that – through Jesus and in Jesus – God could experience the whole human life from within, from the ‘inside’ of humanity itself. And we Christians can aptly say that humanity is God’s place, the ‘where’ of God. In fact, the fact that God becomes man is the summit of God’s communication of Himself to man, the summit of the encounter between God and man.

### **Let us invoke the Holy Spirit**

Lord, we give thanks to You  
because You gathered us into Your Presence  
so that we may listen to Your Word.  
In it, You reveal Your love for us  
and make Your will known to us.  
Please silence within us any other voice  
which is different from Yours.  
And so that we may not be condemned  
by Your Word  
– a word read but not welcomed,  
meditated upon but not loved,  
prayed but not cherished,  
contemplated but not put into practice –  
we beg You to send Your Holy Spirit  
to open up our minds  
and to heal our hearts.  
Only thus our encounter with Your Word  
will be a renewal of the Covenant,  
communion with You and Your Son  
and Your Holy Spirit,  
God blessed now and for ever.  
Amen.  
(Community of Bose)

## **1. Lectio**

**(to read the Word / to listen to it)**

### **Hebrews 1:1-2**

*1 At many moments in the past and by many means, God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets;*

*2 but in our time, the final days, He has spoken to us in the person of His Son, whom He appointed heir of all things and through whom He made the ages.*

- Let us read the text more than once, slowly and making a pause each time...

- Let us go into the text's depths.

### **The Context**

This Letter is not by St Paul. However, it is so close to his understanding that we may suppose it was written by someone accompanying him in his apostolic journeys or by one of his disciples. It is addressed to the Christians of Jewish origin.

Basically, this text is not a 'letter'. In fact, there is neither a definite 'sender' nor a definite addressee. It is mainly an 'exhortation' ("words of encouragement"), as the author says in 13:22. Only at its end (13:22-25), the author inserts a 'card' of news, good wishes and greetings for its addressees who, however, still remain anonymous. It is entitled 'To the Hebrews' because of its contents. It refers to the Jewish Temple liturgy, which only some 'Christian' Jews could have understood. This text must therefore have been written before AD 66, when the Temple worship was still going on. Or better, before the destruction of the Temple in AD 70 as a consequence of the Jewish revolt.

At the end of the Prologue (1:1-4), which presents Christ, the Son of God and His 'definitive Revelation', superior to both the angels and to Moses, the 'mediators' of the Old Covenant (1:5-4:13), the Letter to the Hebrews focuses on Christ Himself, made by the Most High the High Priest (4:14-7:28) who sealed the New Covenant (8:1-13) by offering Himself as a sacrifice, infinitely more precious to God than the sacrifices of animals offered to Him as holocausts according to the Law, which were just a 'shadow' of the new (9:1-10:18).

Then come the exhortations (10:19-13:15) to hold fast to faith, which make use of examples taken from sacred history, all of them important personalities whose faith never wavered, up to the point of being martyred (11:1-12:29).

The Letter to the Hebrews, because of its wisdom about Jesus Christ (the "High Priest" of "the New Covenant"), is an outstanding, incomparable, unique text among all the different books of the New Testament. It may be compared to a homily of the early Christian Church, written for a liturgical celebration. And its addressees could be the members of a Christian community ill at ease with Judaism and its institutions (such as the priestly caste and temple worship).

The text we are dealing with (1:1-2) is made up of the first two verses which open the whole letter. Some of their aspects come to the fore immediately:

- | <b>1:1</b>                           | <b>1:2a</b>                  |
|--------------------------------------|------------------------------|
| a) At many moments and by many means | a') the final days           |
| b) God,                              | b') (God)                    |
| c) spoke                             | c') has spoken               |
| d) in the past                       | d') in our time              |
| e) to our ancestors                  | e') to us                    |
| f) through the prophets              | f') in the person of His Son |

By this comparison, we gather that in very few words the author has been able to draw the whole economy of Salvation, fulfilled by the Son, Jesus Christ, the Incarnate Verb, the only language that men can understand. He is the God-made-man, offering us the space of His humanity so that all men can understand Him.

1:1-2a

The ‘speaking God’ is the very focus of the whole Scripture: He speaks “at many moments and by many means”. The Greek term (‘polymeros’) implies that God spoke through the prophets to many generations, but also that His revelation was compact, firm, whole, and still multifarious (‘polutropos’). These two terms could be synonyms and denote the multifarious features of the wisdom and person of God. Let us just think about the many different ways God spoke to His people. The Old Testament, especially from Abraham onwards, shows us the history of God’s word as a Covenant history (cf Gn 12:1-2; Ex 3:6-8; 19:18-19; Jr 7:25; 25:4; 1 K 19:12).

Here a distinction is made between two different periods of revelation of the Word and two different kinds of mediator.

The first period is: “in the past... God spoke to our ancestors through the prophets”.

The text here refers to the prophets. Let us think about Moses, who was the greatest of all in the Old Testament, or about David... and many other prophets... However, the whole of the Old Testament is a prophetic discourse, inspired Word addressed by God to His people.

The second period is the definitive, eschatological one: “in our time, the final days, He has spoken to us in the person of His Son”.

“In the final days” is a biblical phrase deriving from the Septuaginta, by which the decisive intervention of the Lord at the end of times is announced. In fact, we could render it thus: “at the extremity of our days”.

In this eschatological period of time, God has chosen as His mediator of the Word His very Son, who was present with Him when He created the world (cf Pr 8:30-31) and is the universal heir of all things. It is the Son who establishes a closer relation between man and God, given that He is one with the Father. No other mediator is more perfect than Him. Through His voice we can listen to the voice of the Father, and in Him we can see the Father (cf Jn 5:19ff; 18:8-11).

“...to our ancestors” and “to us”. The “ancestors” are and remain the ‘landmarks’, the masters and fathers in faith (cf Heb 11:2). Therefore, “to our ancestors” does not refer to humankind in its universality. Here the author speaks to a community of Jewish origin and he is himself a Jew, with a deep knowledge of the history of faith. The phrase anticipates Chapter 11 on “The exemplary faith of our ancestors”. Of course, “to us” refers to the present and to the readers and all those who will read the Letter in the future.

1:2b

“His Son... heir of all things”. This is the first theological qualification: the Son is heir of all things, of all realities. This truth corresponds to what Jesus Himself states at the end of St Matthew’s Gospel : “All authority in Heaven and on earth has been given to me” (Mt 28:18). Here, as in a filigree, we can recognize Daniel’s prophecy on the Son of Man (Dn 7:13-14). Here the whole messianic tradition is fulfilled: it was started at Creation (cf Gn 1:27-28) and then surfaced here and there through the whole Scripture (cf Gn 15; 2 S 7:5-12; Ps 89:27-28; Ps 2:8). By His death and resurrection, Christ is made “heir of all things”, the One in whom the entire plan of God is fulfilled. He is therefore the Omega, the summit of human history as well as of the history of salvation, God’s definitive Verb.

1:2c

“...through whom He made the ages.” This is the second theological qualification: with Him in mind and thanks to His action, God created the worlds (plural) or the “ages”. This term refers to the present world (Heb 9:9) and to the future one (Heb 2:5). The Son is the Mediator in Creation. By the way, if He is the Omega, that is, the ultimate end, He is also the Alpha, that is, the beginning of everything, the One who did exist before the beginning, the Eternal Verb, the primordial Word by whom God created the world. The New Testament reminds us of that many times: Jn 1:3, 10; 1 Co 8:6; Col 1:16-17.

## **2. Meditatio**

**(to meditate on the Word / to let it resound)**

After reading the text, let the Word resound in our hearts...

- The first thing to highlight is that God, the Father, wants to speak to man; but it is not a generic man: He wants to speak to me, to my history, to my existence. My humanity is the space in which God chose to come to me.

- Jesus, the Son’s Incarnation, is the place where the Creator and the creature can meet. However, Jesus’ humanity, before becoming a theological concept, is the reality taken upon Himself by God, in a concrete way, when He becomes a baby-boy-man; and where He can experience the whole of humanity. Jesus cries, smiles, is hungry, is thirsty... He looks for the friend of His; He talks ; He is sad; He is “angered”; He is drowsy; He feels the heat; He feels compassion; He touches people and lets Himself be touched; He studies the Torah; He goes to the Temple in order to worship; He prays; He looks for solitude; He is sorrowful; He has wishes; He dreams, and so on. All these feelings, emotions, thoughts... are the space inhabited by Jesus, and by us too.

- God chooses to speak to us so... maybe because that is indeed our own language, a language to which we add ‘sin’. Jesus was free of sin, but He took it upon Himself on our behalf. The events, the encounters of our lives, the many occasions of our everyday life, constitute the ways God speaks to us and say the definitive Word: Jesus (‘God saves’).

- The time in which God speaks to us is both the past and the future: given that the Son is the beginning and end of all things (cf Rv 21:6). That implies that everything in me comes from Christ and goes back to Him... my own history, my vocation, what I experience, what I wish, my dreams, what I believe. He is my beginning and my end...

### **3. Oratio** **(to pray the Word / to repeat it)**

It is beautiful to praise You, O Lord, because Your love-initiative always catches us by surprise!

We are a stubborn people, but Your patience overcomes our stubbornness; we are superficial and willing to follow each and every ideology that comes into fashion,

but You are the Good Shepherd looking for us and taking us back to the sheepfold;

we are sinners and at times we revel in sin,

but You become the cleansing water, washing away our stains.

You spoke to us many times and in many different ways,

You tried everything, adapting Yourself to us, You who are the Creator,

and now, in the fullness of time, when we were ready,

according to Your plan, You sent us Your definitive Verb, the Last One,

Your Only-begotten Son, the Verb, the Word,

who took upon Himself our humanity

and who made of it the space we must inhabit together with Him.

Jesus, the Son, has revealed to us the face of the Father,

given that He was the only One who knew it.

And this Word has been given to us daily,

as a new as well as old gift repeated with patience and love,

so that each and every man can discover his own dignity as a son of God.

Amen.

### **4. Contemplatio** **(to contemplate the Word / silence)**

In silence... we turn our inner sight to the One who spoke to us in the Son. May we be filled with amazement, as we have been so loved by Him that He decided to experience our own finitude, the fragility of our own flesh....

### **5. Collatio** **(to share the Word)**

In order for the Word to be like yeast and become incarnate in our very lives, let us share it with the Sisters... As long as we 'break' it, it multiplies and opens our eyes and hearts... and we will be able to recognize Him in our lives...

### **What RM's Rule of Life says**

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"...God the Father is (...) incessantly turning our hearts to Christ..."

God, the Father, wants to speak to man. Jesus, the Son's Incarnation, is the place where the Creator and the creature can meet.

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"You shall make your Vow of Obedience real by lovingly welcoming, day after day, the various situations of life..."

The events, the encounters of our lives, the many occasions of our everyday life, constitute the ways God speaks to us and say the definitive Word: Jesus ('God saves').

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"Our vocation (...) grows within the continual pattern of invitation and response till it reaches the perfect stature of Christ."

Everything in me comes from Christ and goes back to Him... my own history, my vocation, what I experience, what I wish, my dreams, what I believe. He is my beginning and my end...