### THE EPIPHANY OF JESUS AS KING IN THE GOSPEL OF JOHN

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#### Abstract:

Yesus datang ke dunia untuk mewartakan Kerajaan Allah. Pesan itu dengan jelas diungkapkan oleh para penginjil Sinoptik. Sementara dalam Injil Yohanes, meskipun pesan tentang Kerajaan Allah itu disampaikan, tetapi wacana yang ditonjolkan lebih kuat adalah tentang martabat Yesus sebagai raja. Warta ini menjadi ciri khas Injil Yohanes dalam diskursus para penginjil tentang "Kerajaan Allah". Status rajawi Yesus menjadi bingkai para murid dalam memahami jati diri Yesus, menjadi cara orang banyak memandang Yesus yang menghadirkan mukjizat, dan pada akhirnya, berkat desakan kebencian para imam kepala yang tak dapat dibendung oleh Pilatus sebagai pembawa otoritas Romawi, menjadi jalan Yesus menuju kematian sebagai Mesias, "Raja orang Yahudi." Tulisan ini ingin menampilkan gambaran tentang status rajawi Yesus, berpuncak pada penegasan bahwa kerajaan Yesus "berasal dari atas", berazas "kebenaran".

Keywords: Kingdom of God, kingship of Jesus, Gospel of John.

### **1. Introduction: The Kingdom of God** and the Kingship of Jesus

Reflecting the same mysteries, each of the four evangelists has their own theology. But above all John, more than the others, highlights the spiritual depth of the mysteries of Christ. Thus the stories and the discourses, which the Synoptic Gospels present in a more historical, human or visible way, were simultaneously exposed by John on two levels: the historical and the symbolic ones. They are presented in such a way that the historical events become proper signs that bear the evangelical messages by revealing deepest the mysteries, the symbolic and spiritual ones.<sup>1</sup>

Within such a context, we can ask what the Johannine treatment is like with respect to the theme of the "kingdom of

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God", which is clearly present in the Synoptic Gospel as the main preaching of Jesus. It is noted, thus, that the terminology of "the kingdom of God" as such is present many times in the synoptic gospels, in particular in Mark and Luke. But, as a matter of fact, while Matthew prefers the terminology of "the kingdom of heaven", in John the term "the kingdom of God" is used only twice, in Jesus' discourse with Nicodemus.

Therefore, to answer such a question, this paper wants to discuss the issue in a particular way, following the particular approach of John regarding this issue. First, it intends to trace some elements that build the Johannine understanding on the theme of "the kingdom of God", noting that the fourth Gospel has its own approach to conveying

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>1</sup> Cfr. Ignace de la Potterie, *La Passione di Gesù secondo il vangelo di Giovanni* (Milano: San Paolo, 1999<sup>4</sup>), 8.

the mystery of Jesus to the readers by using this term. But, moreover, the main point of this paper is then to show that in John Jesus does not in particular herald the coming of a kingdom or bring forth the right understanding of the kingdom as in the Synoptic Gospels. In John Jesus distinctly and solemnly reveals himself as king.

This kingship of Jesus in John is accentuated in depth, in such a way so his presence is none other than the presence of the divine king par excellence. He says, "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." (18:36). After mentioning the origin of his kingship, Jesus says about the intention of his coming into this world: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth." (18:37). Marking his particular origin, he stresses that he is the king in whom the children of Israel hoped for their salvation (1:49): "Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice" (18:37).<sup>2</sup>

# 2. The kingdom of God and Generation of Man from Above (3:1-6)

Nicodemus is one of the leaders of the Jews and the expert in the science of the Law, representing those from his people and from the human race who hope from Jesus some enlightenment. He recognizes the divine presence of Jesus in the signs that Jesus has made. In the initial dialogue with him, Jesus speaks precisely of the moment of the generation "anew", "from above", of every man as the key to seeing the kingdom of God: "unless one is born anew, he cannot see the kingdom of God" (3:3)<sup>3</sup>. Then, answering the question about how this "second" generation <sup>4</sup> could have come about – in Nicodemus's thought it is the one being born again from his own mother's womb – Jesus says again: "unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God." (3:5).

The expression "the kingdom of God" in general means "eternal life", that is, "the divine life which expands when God reigns".<sup>5</sup> It is the eschatological one.<sup>6</sup> And it is always with the annotation that John's eschatology is anticipated in the present: "He who believes in the Son has eternal life" (3:36); an eschatology already realized: "But the hour is coming, and now is." (4:23).<sup>7</sup> Furthermore, it is a question of that kingdom which "was in the beginning", because "in the beginning was the king" (see 1:1).

On the part of man, "seeing the kingdom of God" and "entering it" are mainly rooted in the "remote past": it is the ability of one who "was generated" from above, that is, "of water and the Spirit". Therefore, the presence of the kingdom of God or, better to say, the coming of the king of that kingdom in this world now is to reveal to men the door to enter it by means of spiritual generation, which is already symbolized by the carnal generation.

The "generation from water and Spirit", however, refers first of all to creation and to the covenant: the "new

- <sup>5</sup> Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 260.
- <sup>6</sup> Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 252.
- <sup>7</sup> Cfr. Valerio Mannucci, Giovanni, il Vangelo narrante. Introduzione all'arte narrativa del quarto Vangelo (Bologna: EDB, 2005<sup>3</sup>), 311-314.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>2</sup> For the quotation of the text of the Gospel I use *Ignatius Catholic Study Bible: The Gospel of John.*With Introduction, Commentary, and Notes by Scott Hahn and Curtis Mitch and with Study Question by Dennis Walters (San Francisco: Ignatius Press, 2010).

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>3</sup> The pronominal indefinite nominative singular masculine adjective *tis* in this context refers to the universal subject "every man". Cfr. Yves Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni. Una traduzione e un'interpretazione* (Bologna: EDB, 2002<sup>2</sup>), 252.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>4</sup> The adverb ánōthen can mean both "from above" and "again"; it is the context that guides the choice. Cfr. Xavier Léon-Dufour, *Lettura dell'evangelo secondo Giovanni* (Milano: San Paolo, 2007<sup>2</sup>), 259.

covenant" which "is older than the old", a unique "moment" which brings about creation, the first ever, before baptism. "What of creation had not appeared in history, had not yet manifested itself to the conscience of men, from the point of view of the origin, is now revealed from the end". Reflecting baptism, the novelty of this revelation to Nicodemus consists not in a duplication of creation or of the covenant, but in its fulfillment in the eschatological moment. More than "seeing the kingdom" (3:3), now it is a question of "entering it" (3:5), of welcoming it and becoming an integral part of it. 8 But "seeing the kingdom" and "entering the kingdom" have mainly the same meaning: to experience life.9

# 3. "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the King of Israel!" (1:49)

Philip presents Jesus to Nathanael with two expressions: "him of whom Moses in the law and also the prophets wrote", and then "Jesus of Nazareth, the son of Joseph" (1:45). The first expression refers to all of the Scriptures of the Old Testament and to its fulfillment in its aspects: royal, priestly, prophetic and apocalyptic. The second expression, the title "the son of Joseph", refers not only to Joseph, the carpenter of Nazareth, but above all to the last Patriarch Joseph, and therefore to all patriarchs, since Adam: all exercise a priestly mediation between God and their people. "The son of Joseph", therefore, is not an earthly identity but the priestly and royal title of Messiah. The one "of Nazareth" does not refer to Joseph, but precisely to "Jesus, son of Joseph". 10 It is because the content of Philip's message is so great that Nathanael preserves the affirmation of him asking:

""Can anything good come out of Nazareth?" (1:46).

Like the other disciples in this passage fourth Gospel, the however. from Nathanael meets Jesus not because of Jesus' call or choice to follow him but precisely because of the disciple's inner desire to find the Messiah, in the person of Jesus. "Under the fig tree" (1:48) means diligence in the study of the Law "under the tree of the knowledge of happiness and misfortune".11 And Jesus knew it! In the case of Nathanael, it is therefore a question of the human desire for divine salvation, that the Israelite children hoped for the coming of the Messiah and, without a doubt, of the happiness of finding him at the moment in the person of Jesus!

In this discourse, it is not firstly a question of a creation of a kingdom in which Nathanael could participate. But rather it is a question of an encounter with a king, the one of the divine who expected him: "Rabbi, you are the Son of God, you are the king of Israel!" (1:49). In other words, it is a personal confession of the kingship of God in his Son.<sup>11</sup> Then, on Jesus' part. it is the apocalyptic announcement of the covenant between God and his people, which miraculously opens up the eschatological possibility for Nathanael to enter the kingdom which is already established "in the beginning": "You shall see greater things than these [...] You will see heaven opened, and the angels of God ascending and descending upon the Son of man" (1:50-51).<sup>12</sup>

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>8</sup> Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 252-253. Cfr. Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 262-263.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>9</sup> Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 260-261.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>10</sup> Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 193-196. <sup>11</sup> Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 183-184.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>11</sup> Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 198-199.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>12</sup> Cfr. Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 185-189. Here, discussing 1:50-51, Leon-Dufour refers to Gen 28:12 and Wis 10:10.

### 4. "They were about to come and take him by force to make him king" (6:15)

The crowd significantly enters the discourse on the kingdom after having experienced a sign in the eschatological miracle of the loaves, which refers to the divine banquet of the great apocalypse of Is 24-27:<sup>13</sup> "This is indeed the prophet who is to come into the world!" (6:14). It is a sort of surprise, the one of the kind that Nathanael experiences and affirms: "It's him!". The popular messianic expectation, therefore, is already touched by the character promised by God, a prophet who would have been similar to Moses,<sup>14</sup> "who is to come into the world". Behold, this crowd wants to make him king!

But it's an irony. He is the king from divine origin "in the beginning"; and the crowd certainly has no authority or anything so proportional to making God a king! Obviously, it is not a question of the malice on the part of the crowd, but of their misunderstanding of the dignity of that prophet "who-comes into the world" and of the essence of the truth that Jesus reveals in the miracle of the loaves. Only in his death on the cross is this mystery fully torn away. At the moment Jesus takes refuge on the in the "place of God": mountain. "Perceiving then that they were about to come and take him by force to make him king, Jesus withdrew again to the hills by himself." (6:15).

The conflict of understanding and intentions between Jesus and the crowd comes after everything is already ready and mature. It happens after the raising of Lazarus, when the Jews decisively resolved the death of the king, following the prophecy of the high priest Caiaphas: "You know nothing at all; you do not understand that it is expedient for you that one man should die for the people, and that the whole nation should not perish." (11:49-50).

Thus Jesus comes to Jerusalem, to the holy city, to his temple and his sanctuary which are symbols of his body.<sup>15</sup> The large crowd, having heard that Jesus is coming to Jerusalem, spontaneously makes the gesture of taking palm branches invoking the blessing and salvation of "he who comes in the name of the Lord, even the King of Israel!" (12:13).

Then Jesus enters into the moment of his royal glorification sitting on a donkey, the creature that symbolizes royalty, justice and victory rather than humility: "Fear not, daughter of Zion; behold, your king is coming, sitting on a donkey's colt!" (12:15). Thus, it is God himself who comes! It is he himself, the king of Israel!

## 5. "Are you the King of the Jews?" (18:33)

The discourse on the kingdom enters the most significant moment during the interrogation before Pilate as a representation of the pagan world: an indifferent manager of earthly power who is repressed by those who are in his submission! It is repression to make a death sentence! The question is centered precisely on the kingship of Jesus: "Are you the king of the Jews?" Thus the contemplation of Jesus as king dominates the process.

Obviously, the expectation of the coming of the Messiah who must reestablish the sovereignty of Israel is at the bottom of the discourse on "the king of the Jews". And this expectation is evident in two episodes: the first, in the will of the crowd to make Jesus king after the miracle of the loaves and, the second, their enthusiasm during Jesus' entry into

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>13</sup> Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 319.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>14</sup> Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 448.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>15</sup> Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 490. Here, John refers to Zeph 3:16-17 and Zeph 9:9-10.

Jerusalem after the return to life of Lazarus.<sup>16</sup>

Pilate's expression "king of the Jews" is precisely the secularized form for "Messiah" or for the messianic title of "king of Israel", a conception that is certainly in the minds of the high priests and is transferred in the struggle to the profane level of politics. <sup>17</sup> With this «crime of revolt» against the sovereignty of the emperor, the Roman prefect Pilate, to whom *ius gladii* is reserved,<sup>18</sup> must sentence this man to death. Such is the bestial scenario of the high priests.

Jesus' answer to Pilate's question should be "yes" or "no," so the case can be clearly judged. But, asking about the origin of Pilate's accusation in an authoritative tone, Jesus offers an unforeseeable reaction: ""Do you say this of your own accord, or did others say it to you about me?" (18:34). The indifference of the prefect's answer marks his intuition that the accused is not a threat to start a revolt: «Am I a Jew? Your own nation and the chief priests have handed you over to me; what have you done?" (18:35).

Precisely at this point Jesus properly pronounces on his kingship: "My kingship is not of this world; if my kingship were of this world, my servants would fight, that I might not be handed over to the Jews; but my kingship is not from the world." (18:36). Spoken with serenity and in a mysterious tone, it is a statement to be clarified! However, a clarification is not helpful; it suffices to conclude: "So you are a king?" (18:37). But, Jesus' position is always in the same tone and with the same authority: "You say that I am a king. For this I was born, and for this I have come into the world, to bear witness to the truth. Everyone who is of the truth hears my voice." (18:37).

While Pilate is remaining in the same indifference: "What is truth?" (18:38).

Responding in his way: "You say that I am a king", Jesus continues to pronounce his own kingship again with authority, so he continues his journey of discourse on his identity. He doesn't confirm the question, but he also doesn't deny it. He does not say "ves, I am a king" so he avoids unconditional approval of what Pilate means. In reality, thus, Jesus says "yes" and "no" at the same moment. He accepts the title, but he interprets it differently.<sup>19</sup> Leaving aside the indifference of the procurator of the pagan world and earthly power and also his inability to understand the seriousness of everything that lies in the way, the discourse, therefore, focuses on the whole idea of Jesus on his kingship, on the character of the his kingdom and the reason for his presence in the world.

Using this particular way, Jesus affirms his own *basíleia*, his own kingship,<sup>20</sup> which is in the first place characterized by his provenance "not from this world". His legitimacy does not come from this earth, and is distinguished from any institution of worldly power. Therefore having the "reality" or the different nature, the kingdom of Jesus also does not carry the "logic of combat" of this earth. Precisely for this reason Jesus avoids Pilate's conception of power.

What is important to Jesus is his universal mission to bear witness to the truth, so that "everyone who is of the truth" hears his voice. His birth into the world is, therefore, not for dominion over the nations but a coming for an appeal to anyone who has the provenance of truth to live in it. His

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>16</sup> Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 1061-1062.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>17</sup> Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 712. Cfr. de la Potterie, *La Passione*, 77-78.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>18</sup> Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 711.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>19</sup> Cfr. de la Potterie, *La Passione*, 79.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>20</sup> According to Leon-Dufour, the Greek term *basíleia* here does not mean "kingdom" as the expression "kingdom of God" (3:3.5), but "kingship", the one that the Son exercises since his coming into the world. Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 1063.

sovereignty is in this world but it is realized in a different way.<sup>21</sup>

The significant point to which Jesus must bear witness is the "truth". In the biblical senses, both apocalyptic and sapiential, truth means the revelation of the divine plan of salvation. It is not something that human reason can find independently, but the manifestation and unveiling of God's plan. It comes through the words of a prophet, the message of an angel, or a supernatural apparition that reveals a divine secret. Above all at the moment "the revealed glory" is God himself, that is, in the light of the prologue (1:14-17), the Word who "became flesh and dwelt among us". It is the proper gift of truth "full of grace and truth".

With the affirmation that "He who has seen me has seen the Father", (14:9) the testimony of Jesus, as the "king of truth", reaches its eminent form. The totality of his testimony thus becomes God's total revelation to the truth. On this truth earthly power indifferently asks: "What is truth?" Yet, its sovereignty is confirmed little by little, basically from heart to heart, on earth.<sup>23</sup>

### 6. "Where are you from?" (19:9)

By political instinct Pilate finds no cause for condemnation and declares the innocence of Jesus to the high priests, so logically Jesus should be freed. Knowing, however, that they firmly demand the death of Jesus, Pilate, in order to reach an agreement with them, proposes the grace of the Easter amnesty for "the king of the Jews", in reality the Messiah. Contrary to this proposal, the high priests choose the freedom of a bandit, perhaps a zealot, a false messiah, Barabbas, thus placing themselves at the level of this messianic or salvific claim.<sup>22</sup>

Pilate then enters the most intense moment of the process by taking Jesus and scourging him. This behavior of violence would be in contradiction with the declaration of Jesus' innocence, but it finds justification throughout the process as a strategy to demonstrate to the high priests a pitiful figure who has been violated so that the idea of a "king of the Jews" is absurd, and to humiliate the national pride of these Jews who have the will to condemn. With this passage begins the episode of the Suffering Servant in Is 50:6 LXX.<sup>23</sup>

The coronation done by Roman soldiers would be an enthronement or a royal epiphany. The robe means the body, and purple evokes royalty. The process of homage and the insignia of the coronation, which are presented, are usually applicable in both Jewish and pagan society. They result in a universal character of the scene. In harmony with this regal character, the priestly and cultic dimension rooted in the liturgical texts of the Old Testament and the openness to the pagan world through symbolism as present in the texts of wisdom are included.<sup>24</sup>

At this point comes the culmination of the process: Pilate, emphasizing Jesus' innocence, presents Jesus who is suffering as a humiliated and condemned man: "Here is the man!". It is not to ask the high priests for mercy, but rather to mock them, because both, the idea of "the king of the Jews" and their extreme desire to condemn this man, are meaningless. Within this gesture, however, the royal power and majesty of the Messiah are totally radiated!<sup>27</sup>

The leaders of the Jews, however, respond: "Crucify him, crucify him!" And Pilate, again declaring the innocence of

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>21</sup> Cfr. Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 713-714; Léon-Dufour, Lettura, 1063-1067. <sup>23</sup> Cfr. de la Potterie, La Passione, 79-84; Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 713-714.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>22</sup> de la Potterie, *La Passione*, 86-87. Cfr. Simoens, *Secondo Giovanni*, 719; Léon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 1068.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>23</sup> Cfr. Leon-Dufour, *Lettura*, 1069-1071.

<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>24</sup> Cfr. Simoens, Secondo Giovanni, 723-729. <sup>27</sup> Leon-Dufour, Lettura, 1072.

Jesus, allows them to crucify him just to say: you are very wrong! Their bestial reaction, however, evokes a disturbance in him, a sort of agitation of the enigma about the religious and intransigent mentality of these people, and rather about the phantom identity of that person himself who raises the problem: "We have a law, and by that law he ought to die, because he has made himself the Son of God." (19:7). The one who for Pilate is never a threat, is nothingness, for them is a totally divine problem, a blasphemy, something to be demolished forever in order not to be condemned in eternity.

Therefore, Pilate's question about the origin of Jesus: "Where are you from?" is not merely a simple question. It is but above all a part of the riddle for this secular man, one that breaks his indifference: the struggle to understand this mysterious man becomes, rather, an idea to save him! But Pilate, thinking he has the power to free Jesus and to crucify him, is then wrong because the case of Jesus is fully in God's mysterious plan of salvation, the true God who does not interest him! The leaders of the Jews, the chief priests, reacting to his emperor's effort, exclaim to the representative again of the need for condemnation for the sake of Roman peace! Even in the last passage Pilate fails to save Jesus from condemnation. He presents Jesus: "Here is your King!". But they cried out: "Away with him, away with him, crucify him!". (19:14). When Pilate said to them, "Shall I crucify your King?" they answered, "We have no king but Caesar." (19:15).

# 7. "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" (19:19)

The royal epiphany of Jesus in John obviously culminates in his enthronement on the cross, at the moment of his death. A title is written in Hebrew, in Latin and in Greek, and is put on the cross so that all peoples recognize him, which read: "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews." (19:19-20). Following their own logic, the chief priests insist Pilate that this messianic title could be replaced with an accusation of blasphemy, with which they has charged Jesus of before and by this accusation he is sentenced to death by crucifixion: "Do not write, 'The King of the Jews,' but, 'This man said, I am King of the Jews.'" (19:21). But Pilate cannot be moved: "What I have written I have written." (19:22). Thus the title is still hanging on the cross of Jesus and is displayed to point to him as the messianic King of the Jews.

As regards this moment of crucifixion, Jesus has mentioned it as a "lifting up from the earth", which he means as the particular way of his death: "and I, when I am lifted up from the earth, will draw all men to myself.' He said this to show by what death he was to die." (12:32-33). Thus, the moment of the death of Jesus is also a moment of drawing all men to himself. It is a moment of exaltation on the cross of "Jesus of Nazareth, the King of the Jews" and of gathering all peoples to be close to him.

Before, Jesus also told Nicodemus about this moment of exaltation, referring to the lifting up the serpent done by Moses for the salvation of the people of Israel. Being lifted up to the cross, Jesus, the messianic King of the Jews, brings everyone who believes in him salvation in eternal life: "No one has ascended into heaven but he who descended from heaven, the Son of man. And as Moses lifted up the serpent in the wilderness, so must the Son of man be lifted up, that whoever believes in him may have eternal life." (3:13-15).

## 8. Epilogue: A Discipleship of Faith

In our general overview regarding the theme of "the kingdom of God", the fourth Gospel clearly presents more advanced reflections that we don't find in the Synoptic Gospels. There are some mentions of the kingdom of God, that is developed with a very deep spiritual dimension equipped by an elaboration on the kingship of Jesus, the Son of God. This kingship has its divine and primordial character "in the beginning" (1:1), and expands to human life by his incarnational dwelling among peoples (1:14) to realize his mission for the salvation of the world (3:16). Culminating in the moment of his exaltation on the cross as "the King of the Jews" (19:19), by his salvific dwelling he brings everyone who believes in him eternal life (3:15).

This dwelling of Jesus among peoples then should be responded with their dwelling in him as disciples: "Abide in me, and I in you. As the branch cannot bear fruit by itself, unless it abides in the vine, neither can you, unless you abide in me." (15:4). Thus, the kingship of Jesus for men is a kingship of bonding and intimate relationship with him. It is also a kingship of fruitful life, of God's glorification and a proven discipleship of faith: "If you abide in me, and my words abide in you, ask whatever you will, and it shall be done for you. By this my Father is glorified, that you bear much fruit, and so prove to be my disciples." (15:7-8).

To conclude this discussion, then it seems important to mention discipleship as a life dwelt in him. How can one bring this discourse on the kingship of Jesus revealed in the Gospel of John into one's life that passes by in his daily life as Jesus' disciple? The question from the point of view of spiritual theology would be: how one as his disciple can reach progress or grow in his life by participating in the divine life,<sup>25</sup> in the light of the theology of the kingdom of God in the Gospel of St. John? It is hoped that by being a disciple of Jesus this particular teaching of the kingdom of God in John gives us some meaningful light.

Following the perspective of John, the answer would be: by being born "anew" of water and the Spirit and returning to God's saving love for men. We can say it further: through baptism, where faith in Jesus is manifested, when one enters the mystery of creation and the covenant of love with God in his kingdom, and by which a life of grace is once again fulfilled. It is a new life as Jesus told Nicodemus when he speaks about baptism: "Truly, truly, I say to you, unless one is born of water and the Spirit, he cannot enter the kingdom of God" (3:5).

Then, it is a discipleship of faith. It is a life lived by being a person of truth. In such a life, a person of truth lives by listening to the voice of Jesus (18:37), the divine Word who "came to his own home" (1:11). This person of truth receives him and believes in his name, and thus receives the power to become a child of God "who were born, not of blood nor of the will of the flesh nor of the will of man, but of God." (1:12-13).

A discipleship of faith is a life of personal dialogue with Jesus and of listening to his voice. It is a life of heart to heart conversation with Jesus and to follow him according to one's mission, like the life of Peter to whom Jesus entrusts his flock as the chief shepherd (21:15-18; 1 Pet 5:40). It is also a life lived by serving the community, as Jesus says after he washed the feet of his disciples: "Do you know what I have done to you? You call me Teacher and Lord; and you are right, for so I am. If I then, your Lord and Teacher, have washed your feet, you also ought to wash one another's feet." (12:12-14). It is a life of following Jesus' example: "For I have given you an example, that you also should do as I have done to you." (12:12-15).

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<sup>&</sup>lt;sup>25</sup> Cfr. René Latourelle, *Teologia, scienza della salvezza*, (Assisi, Cittadella Editrice, 2005<sup>8</sup>), 156-158.

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