

**Homily – Wednesday of the Fifth Week of Lent  
Mass for Pontifical Mission Societies – March 29, 2023**

**“Amen, amen, I say to you...”** The Hebrew word “amen” was neither translated into Greek by the Evangelist, nor into Latin by St. Jerome. It has made it all the way to our current English version of this gospel. We have become so used to it that we may not pay much attention to it. Amen means **“truly”, “so be it.”** It seems that, by keeping the Hebrew term, the translators wanted to respect a solemn and commanding tone. By the repetition, the Lord has sworn that his word is true. In other words, he says: **I most truly tell you, as it is, that “*everyone who commits sin is a slave of sin. A slave does not remain in a household forever, but a son always remains. So if the Son frees you, then you will truly be free.*”** The Lord is revealing his true identity. **He is God’s “Amen;” the Truth who is.**

The Lord’s words in today’s gospel take for granted that his listeners are somewhat formed. He is not asking them to study well and learn all the arguments. He takes that for granted. He presents them with an alternative and asks them to take a step forward. **He does not care for sympathizers.** He backs them into a corner, exposing their contradictions and forcing them to pick a side. He commands a response. He despises indifference. Those present must either feel humbled or humiliated. They must either remain with him and convert from the heart, or turn against him.

After revealing his mercy for us – as He did to the adulterous woman – He commands us: **Sin no more!** In line with this command, He tells us: **Remain in my word, dwell in me and you will be free from**

sin. Any kind of sinful obstinacy or willful attachment to sin is out of the question. **The true and constant acceptance of his humbling mercy becomes a lifestyle, a truly Christian identity, a path of liberation.**

He says: *“If you remain in my word, you will truly be my disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free.”* Remaining in the Lord’s word means truly being his disciples; dwelling and remaining under his merciful gaze and in his merciful heart. His call demands a humility of heart which recognizes that truth – which frees from sin – is never our possession, but rather a gift always beyond us. **We cannot be its masters, but merely its guardians and servants, its missionaries.**

Discipleship means remaining in the Father’s house forever, which is no different than the Holy Spirit making the disciple’s heart his dwelling. Pope Francis has said: (quote) *“A disciple is a person who allows him or herself to be guided by the Spirit, and is therefore a person who is rooted in the tradition but can embrace the new, a free person. Free. (...) He or she remains in the Lord, and is inspired by the Spirit.”* (end of quote). Being a disciple of Jesus brings the **freedom to be missionary anywhere and everywhere, all the time.** The sign of a disciple’s true acceptance of the Lord’s mercy is his or her proclamation of the Living Word which transforms hearts.

Our Lady of Guadalupe, bless the Pontifical Mission Societies and missionaries throughout the world, especially those in places where the name of Jesus is not yet known. Help all of us remain in the Lord’s household forever, free in the Holy Spirit. Amen.