

A feast for the Father

By P. Raniero CANTALAMESSA ofmcap,
taken from *The True Lordship of Christ*, ed. Ancora, pp. 96-97

It's sad that in the whole liturgical year there isn't a feast dedicated to the Father, that in the whole Missal there isn't even a votive Mass in His honour. Come to think of it, it's very strange; there are many feasts dedicated to Jesus the Son; there is a feast of the Holy Spirit; there are many feasts dedicated to Mary... There isn't a single feast dedicated to the Father, "*source and origin of all divinity*". We could almost say that the Father, and no longer the Holy Spirit, is "the unknown divinity".

It's true, there is the feast of the Holy Trinity, which, however, is the feast of a mystery, or a dogma and not of a person and, nevertheless, not of a single divine person. Besides, the fact that there is a feast of the Holy Family doesn't mean the Church may not feel the need to celebrate, even individually, the three persons of the Holy Family. There are even two feasts dedicated to Jesus' putative father, but there isn't a single feast dedicated to His real Father. Couldn't this be the moment to fill this gap?

Many feasts originated in order to answer the particular needs of an era: the feast of Corpus Domini, for example, was born as a response of faith to the denial of the real presence, made by Berengario of Tours; to the threat of Jansenism, the Church responded with the feast and devotion to the Sacred Heart and no one will ever know how many spiritual graces this devotion produced. Today, the threat strikes the very heart of the Christian faith which is the revelation of God as Father – the "Father of our Lord Jesus Christ", as St. Paul calls Him – and, therefore, the Trinity itself. It's not a coincidence that Providence is bringing back to mind, in our days, the mystery of God's suffering, but because the Holy Spirit knows that this is the remedy needed to heal the contaminated mind of modern man, who has found, in suffering, the stumbling stone which leads him far away from God.

In the teachings of the Church, feasts have always been a privileged means of allowing a particular mystery or event of the history of salvation to penetrate in the lives of the faithful. The knowledge and familiarity of the Holy Spirit certainly wouldn't be so strong without the feast of Pentecost. Feasts are a living catechesis and today there is an urgent need for a catechesis on the Father. Besides its catechetical value, a feast dedicated to the Father would also have, like any other feast, the value of *homologesis*, that is of a public and joyful confession of faith. In fact, feasts are the highest and most solemn form of proclaiming one's faith, because all people participate in it unanimously. Christians would certainly give great joy to the risen Lord if they were able to accomplish this project "ecumenically", that is, reaching an agreement with all the Churches who accept it in order to celebrate, with one accord, the feast of the Father on the same day.

While we look forward to this day, we can already celebrate the feast of the Father "in spirit and in truth", in the intimacy of our hearts, by perhaps promoting little spiritual initiatives whose purpose is to make the Father known more, to honour Him and express all our filial love for Him, in union with Jesus, who always celebrates His Father... In fact, this is already taking place and many people are experiencing the new and extraordinary fervour it gives to faith and to our whole spiritual life.