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Nm 21,4b-9 opp. Phil 2,6-11; Ps 77; Jn 3,13-17

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The truth is in differences. If differences escape us, even the truth escapes us and everything is eventually taught in error or in confusion. Between the figures of the Old Testament and Lord Jesus, that gives them all fulfilment, differences must always be grasped starting from Christ. Figures are for orientation only. They are not the truth.

From Mount Hor they set out on the Red Sea road, to by-pass the land of Edom. But with their patience worn out by the journey, the people complained against God and Moses, "Why have you brought us up from Egypt to die in this desert, where there is no food or water? We are disgusted with this wretched food!" In punishment the Lord sent among the people saraph serpents, which bit the people so that many of them died. Then the people came to Moses and said, "We have sinned in complaining against the Lord and you. Pray the Lord to take the serpents from us." So Moses prayed for the people, and the Lord said to Moses, "Make a saraph and mount it on a pole, and if anyone who has been bitten looks at it, he will recover." Moses accordingly made a bronze serpent and mounted it on a pole, and whenever anyone who had been bitten by a serpent looked at the bronze serpent, he recovered (Num 21,4-9).

The biblical episode of the bronze serpent reveals to us three truths: the people does not believe in the ways indicated by God to reach the Promised Land and murmurs against him and against Moses. Without the Lord's guidance, the people enters a process of death. There is no life without listening to his voice. Out of the Word the poisonous snakes bite and one dies. There are no human remedies. It is necessary for God to give his remedy. What is the Lord's remedy? Faith in his Word. Whoever looks at the snake, he heals. Who does not look at it dies. Let us observe the differences with Jesus. Every man is already in death, because he is bitten by the ancient serpent with the sin of the origins and with personal sins. Man asks for a remedy. It is God who gives it to him immediately after sin. This remedy is Christ Jesus. Jesus must not be looked only as a remedy raised on the cross. We must believe in every word of his. One enters his Word, believing and obeying it, he immerses himself in the waters of Baptism - in fact the first truth announced to Nicodemus is Baptism – he becomes one life with Him, never might the serpent bite the body of Christ and those who are in it with faith in his Word. Another antidote against snake bites is the body and blood of Jesus given to us as the body and blood of eternal life. Whoever eats me will live for me. But if we do not believe in Christ Crucified, the only antidote against the bites of the devil, we do not make our daily obedience of his Word, not only do we remain in death, we fall into an even harder and heavier death, because we have not believed in Only Begotten Son of the Father. The grace of life had been given to us. We rejected it. The responsibility is all ours. Neither the Father nor Christ the Lord can be called responsible for death.

No one has gone up to heaven except the one who has come down from heaven, the Son of Man. And just as Moses lifted up the serpent in the desert, so must the Son of Man be lifted up, so that everyone who believes in him may have eternal life." For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life. For God did not send his Son into the world to condemn the world, but that the world might be saved through him.

God sent his Only Son, not to condemn the world, but for its salvation. He did not send him as a judge. He did not come for the final judgment. He sent him to preach the year of grace, that is, the Father's will to remit to man any debt contracted with him. However, remission is conditioned to faith in Christ and in every Word that has come out of his mouth. It is conditioned by the rebirth of water and the Holy Spirit and also by remaining in his body for all the

days of his life. If man refuses the Word, refuses baptism and refuses to be an invisible and visible body of Christ, there is no salvation for him, not because Christ condemns him, but because he is the one that excludes himself from the path of life. He is already in death. The choice to go into life, observing the conditions posed by the Father, belongs only to him.

Mother of God, Angels and Saints, make us of true faith in every Word of Christ Jesus.