

Friday 32nd in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 17,26-37): Jesus said to his disciples, «As it was in the days of Noah, so will it be on the day the Son of Man comes. Then people ate and drank; they took husbands and wives. But on the day Noah entered the ark, the flood came and destroyed them all. Just as it was in the days of Lot: people ate and drank, they bought and sold, planted and built. But on the day Lot left Sodom, God made fire and sulfur rain down from heaven which destroyed them all. So will it be on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

»On that day, if you are on the rooftop, don't go down into the house to get your belongings, and if you happen to be in the fields, do not turn back. Remember Lot's wife. Whoever tries to save his life will lose himself, but whoever gives his life will be born again. I tell you, though two men are sharing the same bed, it may be that one will be taken and the other left. Though two women are grinding corn together, one may be taken and the other left». Then they asked Jesus, «Where will this take place, Lord?». And he answered, «Where the body is, there too will the vultures gather».

«People ate and drank, they bought and sold, planted and built »

Fr. Austin NORRIS
(Mumbai, India)

Today, in the Gospel text, the end times as well as the uncertainty of life is highlighted, not to frighten us, but to keep us fore-armed and focused, ready to meet our Creator. The sacrificial nature of the Gospel is seen in its Lord and Saviour Jesus Christ as he leads us by example, to be ever ready to seek and do the Will of God. Constant vigilance and preparedness is the hallmark of the ardent disciple. We cannot just be like people who «ate and drank, they bought and sold,

planted and built...» (Lk 17:28). We disciples must be ready and watchful, lest we be lulled into spiritual lethargy by the progress of life from one generation to the next and assume that Jesus won't return after all.

Secularism has taken strong roots in our society. The onslaught of innovation and ready availability of personal goods and services makes us feel self-sufficient and devoid of God's presence in our lives. It is only when tragedy strikes that we are awakened from our slumber to look at God amidst our "vale of tears...". And we must be thankful for these tragic moments, because they surely must serve to strengthen our faith.

In the recent months, the attacks on Christian in several parts of the world (including my very own country India), may have shaken our faith. But the Holy Father Francis says: «Christians are ultimately hopeful, however, because at the end, Jesus makes a promise that is a guarantee of victory: 'Whoever gives his life will be born again' (Lk 17:33)». This is a truth that we can rely on... The powerful witness of our brothers and sisters who lay down their lives for the faith and the witness to Christ shall not be in vain.

And so we labour onwards in the journey of our lives in the sincere hope of meeting our God «on the day the Son of Man is revealed» (Lk 17:30).

«Whoever tries to save his life will lose himself, but whoever gives his life will be born again»

Fr. Enric PRAT i Jordana
(Sort, Lleida, Spain)

Today, in the context of a prevailing materialist culture, many people behave as they did in Noah's time: «People ate and drank; they took husbands and wives» (Lk 17:27); or as in the days of Lot, when «(...) they bought and sold, planted and built» (Lk 17:28). With such shortsighted vision, the supreme aspiration of many persons is centered in their own physical and temporal life and, consequently, all their efforts are reduced to maintain that kind of life, to protect and enrich it.

In the fragment of the Gospel we are commenting today, Jesus wants to step in this fragmentary conception of life that damages the human being and leads it to frustration. And He does it with a conclusive and strong sentence, which may move consciences and force them to come up with some fundamental questions: «Whoever tries to save his life will lose himself, but whoever gives his life will be born again»

(Lk 17:33). Pondering over this lesson of Jesus Christ, St. Augustine says: «What are we therefore to say? Will those who do these things all die, that is, those who get married, plant vineyards and build? Not them, but those who boast of all that, those who place all these things before God, those who are willing to offend God for all these things this very moment».

In fact, who is losing his life while trying to preserve it, but he who has exclusively lived in the flesh, without letting the spirit drift, or who, with a closed mind, selfishly and totally ignore others? For it is obvious that the life of the flesh will eventually be lost, but our spiritual life, if not shared, is also impaired.

Life, per se, tends naturally to growth, exuberance, fructification and reproduction. But, if nobbled and hidden to be ambitiously used with exclusion, it becomes sterile and dies. This is why all the saints, that have taken Jesus, who passionately lived for God and men, as a model, have, in many ways and generously, submitted their lives to the service of God and their fellow men.