

Monday 3th of Advent

Gospel text (Mt 21,23-27): Jesus had entered the Temple and was teaching when the chief priests, the teachers of the Law and the Jewish authorities came to him and asked, «What authority have you to act like this? Who gave you authority to do all this?». Jesus answered them, «I will also ask you a question, only one. And if you give me an answer, then I will tell you by what authority I do these things. When John began to baptize, was it a work of God, or was it merely something human?». They reasoned out among themselves, «If we reply that it was a work of God, he will say: ‘Why, then, did you not believe him?’. And if we say: ‘The baptism of John was merely something human’, beware of the people: since all hold John as a prophet». So they answered Jesus, «We do not know». And Jesus said to them, «Neither will I tell you by what right I do these things».

«What authority have you to act like this? Who gave you authority to do all this?»

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Today, the Gospel looks at two aspects of Jesus' personality: His shrewdness and His authority. Let's take his shrewdness first: He knows the heart of man deeply, he knows the inner life of all those who approach him. And when the High Priests and the authorities are sent to maliciously ask him: «What authority have you to act like this? Who gave you authority to do all this?» (Mt 21:23), Jesus, who knows their falseness, replies with another question: «When John began to baptize, was it a work of God, or was it merely something human?» (Mt 21:25). They do not know what to answer, because if they say that it came from God, they would be in contradiction with themselves for not having believed it, and if they say that it came from men they would be up against the people, who saw John as a prophet. They find themselves painted into a corner. Cunningly, with a simple question, Jesus has exposed their hypocrisy; He has given them the truth. And the truth is always uncomfortable, it can knock one off balance.

We should have the shrewdness of Jesus, to knock that which is a lie off its kilter. So many times the sons of darkness use all their astuteness to achieve more money, more power and more prestige; while we sons of light seem to have our astuteness and imagination somewhat asleep. Just in the same way that a worldly man uses his imagination to serve his interest, we Christians have to use our talents to serve God and the Gospel. For example: when one is before a person who speaks ill of the Church (as often happens), do we know how to respond with a reply that stops them in their tracks. Or, in a work environment, with a colleague who lives only for himself and “doesn’t give a damn”, do we know how to return good for evil? If we love him as Jesus did, our presence will be “uncomfortable” for him.

Jesus exercised his authority because of the deep knowledge he had of people and of situations. We are also called to have this authority. It is a gift that comes from above. The more we try to put everything in its place —the small things of every day— the more will we know how to deal with different people and different situations, through the inspiration of the Holy Spirit.