Saturday after Ash Wednesday

Gospel text (*Lk* Lk 5:27-32): Jesus saw a tax collector named Levi sitting at the customs post. He said to him, “Follow me.” And leaving everything behind, he got up and followed him. Then Levi gave a great banquet for him in his house, and a large crowd of tax collectors and others were at table with them. The Pharisees and their scribes complained to his disciples, saying, “Why do you eat and drink with tax collectors and sinners?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Those who are healthy do not need a physician, but the sick do. I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

“I have not come to call the righteous to repentance but sinners.”

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Today we see how Lent progresses and the intensity of the conversion to which the Lord calls us. The figure of the apostle and evangelist Matthew is very representative of those who may come to think that, because of our history, or because of personal sins or complicated situations, it is difficult for the Lord to look at us to collaborate with Him.

Well, Jesus Christ, to remove all doubt, puts the tax collector Levi as our first evangelist, to whom he simply says: "Follow me" (Lk 5:27). With him he does exactly the opposite of what a "prudent" mentality might consider if we wanted to appear "politically correct." Levi, on the other hand, came from a world where he suffered the rejection of all his compatriots, since he was considered, just for the fact of being a publican, a collaborator of the Romans and, possibly, a fraudster for "commissions," the one who drowned the poor to collect taxes from them, in short, a public sinner.

Those who considered themselves perfect could not have imagined that Jesus would call Levi to follow him, but even less to sit at the same table.

But with this attitude of choosing him, Our Lord Jesus Christ tells us that it is rather this type of person that he likes to use to extend his Kingdom; he has chosen the wicked, the sinners, those who do not believe themselves to be righteous: “God chose the weak of the world to shame the strong” (1 Cor 1:27). These are the ones who need the doctor, and above all, they are the ones who will understand that others need him.

We must therefore avoid thinking that God wants a clean and immaculate record in order to serve him. He only prepared this history for Our Mother. But for us, subjects of God's salvation and protagonists of Lent, God wants a contrite and humbled heart. Precisely, “God has chosen you to be weak in order to give you his own power” (Saint Augustine). These are the kind of people whom, as the psalmist says, God does not despise.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “But, if you will, you may be healed. Entrust yourself to the Physician, and He will couch the eyes of your soul and of your heart. Who is the Physician? God, who heals and makes alive through His word and wisdom. God by His own word and wisdom made all things.” (Saint Theophilus of Antioch)

- “A first fact strikes one: Jesus does not exclude anyone from his friendship. ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’ (Mk 2:17). The good news of the Gospel consists precisely in this: offering God's grace to the sinner!” (Benedict XVI)

- “Jesus invites sinners to the table of the kingdom: ‘I came not to call the righteous, but sinners’. He invites them to that conversion without which one cannot enter the kingdom, but shows them in word and deed his Father's boundless mercy for them and the vast ‘joy in heaven over one sinner who repents’ (Lk 15:7) The supreme proof of his love will be the sacrifice of his own life ‘for the forgiveness of sins’ (Mt 26:28).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 545)