Monday of the Second Week of Lent

Gospel text (*Lk* 6:36-38): Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful. “Stop judging and you will not be judged. Stop condemning and you will not be condemned. Forgive and you will be forgiven. Give and gifts will be given to you; a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing, will be poured into your lap. For the measure with which you measure will in return be measured out to you.”

“Be merciful, just as your Father is merciful”

Fr. Zacharias MATTAM SDB
(Bangalore, India)

Today we ask ourselves, how does a Christian behave towards his brothers and sisters? Showing the same compassion and kindness shown to him by the heavenly Father: “Be merciful just as your heavenly Father is merciful” (Lk 6:36). Jesus said, “I did not come to condemn the world but to save the world” (Jn 12:47). Jesus did not judge even His own murderers. Instead He was thinking well of them and excusing them and praying for them: “Father, forgive them, they know not what they do” (Lk 23:34). As His disciples, we are invited to be like the Master.

Jesus says, in Mathew’s gospel: “Stop judging, that you may not be judged. Why do you notice the splinter in your brother’s eye, but do not perceive the wooden beam in your own eye?” (Mt 7:1.3). The wooden beam is “the non-love”, the “pride” and “resentment” in our heart. These vices are like a wooden beam preventing us from seeing the fault of our brother from its proper perspective, which is more serious than the fault itself (after all, a splinter!), and therefore those attitudes are what should be banished first. It is only with love that we can truly correct another as “Love bears all things” (1Cor 13:7).

When Jesus says: “Do not judge”, Jesus is not prohibiting the exercise of our faculty of discernment, nor are we asked to approve everything that our brother does. What He is forbidding is to attribute an evil intention to the person for acting thus. Only God knows what is in the heart of a person; “God does not see as a mortal, who sees the appearance. The Lord looks into the heart” (1Sam 16:7) Furthermore, to judge is God’s prerogative, which we usurp when we judge our brother.

What is important in Christianity is love: “Love one another as I have loved you” (Jn 13:34). This love is poured into our hearts through the Holy Spirit (cf. Rm 5:5). In the Eucharist Christ gives us His Heart as a gift and we can love everyone with His Heart and be merciful as the Heavenly Father is merciful.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “To me, God has given his Infinite Mercy, and it is in this ineffable mirror that I contemplate his other divine attributes. Therein all appear to me radiant with Love. His Justice, even more perhaps than the rest, seems to me to be clothed with Love.” (Saint Therese of Lisieux)

- “God cannot simply ignore man’s disobedience and all the evil of history; he cannot treat it as if it were inconsequential or meaningless. Such “mercy”, such “unconditional forgiveness” would be a “cheap grace”. ‘If we are faithless, he remains faithful —for he cannot deny himself’ (2 Tim 2:13).” (Benedict XVI)

- “Now - and this is daunting - this outpouring of mercy cannot penetrate our hearts as long as we have not forgiven those who have trespassed against us. Love, like the Body of Christ, is indivisible; we cannot love the God we cannot see if we do not love the brother or sister we do see (Cf. 1Jn 4:20). In refusing to forgive our brothers and sisters, our hearts are closed and their hardness makes them impervious to the Father's merciful love; but in confessing our sins, our hearts are opened to his grace.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2840)

Other comments

“Give and gifts will be given to you”

Fr. Antoni ORIOL i Tataret
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Today, Luke's Gospel proclaims a short and dense message —very short, indeed!— that can be summarized in two points: a frame of mercy and the contents of justice.

First, a frame of mercy. Jesus' command, indeed, prevails as a rule and shines all around. A most definite norm: if our Father in Heaven is merciful, we, as His children, ought to be merciful, too. And our Father is so merciful...! The previous verse asserts: “(...) And you will be children of the Most High, for he himself is kind to the ungrateful and the wicked” (Lk 6:35).

Secondly, the contents of justice. We are, indeed, facing some kind of “Talion Law”, the direct opposite to the one banned by Jesus (“Eye for eye, tooth for tooth”). Here, in four successive moments, our Divine Teacher exhorts us, first, through two denials; later, with two affirmations. Denials: “Do not be a judge of others and you will not be judged; do not condemn and you will not be condemned”. Affirmations: “forgive and you will be forgiven; give and it will be given to you”.

Let's apply these premises concisely to our daily life, as Jesus does, by stopping especially on the fourth

point. Let's examine, clearly and courageously, our conscience: if in family, cultural, economic and political matters Our Lord would judge and condemn our world as the world judges and condemns, who would stand up in His Tribunal? (When we get back home and read the newspaper or listen to the news, we are basically thinking of the world of politics). If Our Lord would forgive us as we, men, normally would do, how many persons and institutions would reach full reconciliation?

The fourth point deserves, however, an additional thought, as the good Talion Law we are considering, becomes overcome in some way. Indeed, if we give, shall we be given in the same measure? Most definitely not! If we give, we shall receive —let's take good note of it— “a good measure, packed together, shaken down, and overflowing” (Lk 6:38). And it is in the light of that blessed disproportion that we are exhorted to previously give. Let's ask ourselves: how much do I give, do I give properly, do I give enough, do I give by choosing the best, do I give fully...?