

Friday of the Twelfth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 8,1-4): When Jesus came down from the mountain, large crowds followed him. Then a leper came forward. He knelt before him and said, «Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean». Jesus stretched out his hand, touched him, and said, «I want to, be clean again». At that very moment the man was cleansed from his leprosy. Then Jesus said to him, «See that you do not tell anyone, but go to the priest, have yourself declared clean, and offer the gift that Moses ordered as proof of it».

«If you want to, you can make me clean»

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Today, the Gospel shows us a leper, painfully conscious of his sickness, approaching Jesus and beseeching: «Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean» (Mt 8:2). When we see the Lord so close to us but our head, heart and hands so far away from his project, from their salvation, we should also feel the compulsion to formulate the same leper's expression: «Sir, if you want to, you can make me clean».

But an important question prevails: Can a sin-unconscious society beg forgiveness from our Lord? Can it beseech a purification of any kind? We all know too many people with aching and wounded hearts, their personal drama, however, being they do not always realize the extent of their situation. But, in spite of everything, Jesus is always close to us, to the very end of the age (cf. Mt 28:20), while waiting for the same petition: «Sir, if you want to...». But, our collaboration is, of course, needed. St. Augustine's sentence: «God who created you without you, will not save you without you» has become a classical one. So that we can truly change we must strive to ask our Lord for help.

Some might wonder: why is it so important to realize it, to convert and to wish to change? For the simple reason that, should we not feel like that, we should not be able to positively answer the previous question, where we said a sin-unconscious

society will find it very difficult to ask the Lord for help.

This is why, when the moments of repentance and of Sacramental confession arrive, we have to get rid of the past, of all the ulcers infecting our body and our soul. We should not doubt it for a minute: Asking forgiveness is a great moment of Christian initiation, because it is when the bandage over our eyes comes off. But, what if someone does notice his situation but does not want to convert? There is an old proverb that goes: «Long absent, soon forgotten».