Monday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 8:18-22): When Jesus saw a crowd around him, he gave orders to cross to the other shore. A scribe approached and said to him, “Teacher, I will follow you wherever you go.” Jesus answered him, “Foxes have dens and birds of the sky have nests, but the Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head.” Another of his disciples said to him, “Lord, let me go first and bury my father.” But Jesus answered him, “Follow me, and let the dead bury their dead.”

"Follow me"

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Today, the Gospel presents us —through two characters— a quality the good disciple of Jesus must have: a detachment from material goods. Before that St. Matthew's Gospel points out to a detail I would not like to overlook: “When Jesus saw a crowd around him…” (Mt 8:18). Crowds gather around the Lord to listen to his words, to be healed of their material and spiritual sicknesses; they are seeking their salvation and a breath of eternal Life amidst a world in conflict.

As at that time, something similar happens in today's world: more or less consciously, all of us need God's help, to satiate our heart with true spiritual goods, such as a better knowledge of Jesus Christ and a life of friendship and love for Him. Otherwise, we risk tumbling into the trap filling out our heart with other “gods” that cannot give meaning to our live: mobile phones, Internet, tourist holidays, a frantic work schedule to make more money, a car better than the neighbor’s or a gym to excel as the best figure of them all… This is what is happening to many people right now.

In sharp contrast, though, St. John Paul II's outcry to the youth resounded full of force and confidence: «It is possible to be both modern and profoundly faithful to Jesus Christ». For this we need to do as the Lord, breaking away with what may link us to a much materialized way of life that serves no purpose other than closing the doors to the Holy Spirit.

“The Son of Man has nowhere to rest his head (…) Follow me” (Mt 8:22), says today's Gospel. And St. Gregory the Great reminds us: “We make use of temporal things, but our hearts are set on what is eternal. Temporal goods help us on our way, but our desire must be for those eternal realities which are our goal.” This is a good guideline to examine whether we are properly following Jesus.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “We are put in mind to have the temporal things in use, but eternal things in desire ; let us make use of earthly things for the journey, and wish the eternal things for the end of the day.” (Saint Gregory the Great)

- “From gospel times to our own day, Christ's founding will has continued to be at work, the will expressed in that very beautiful and holy invitation addressed to so many souls: ‘Follow me!’" (Saint John Paul II)

- “The initiative of lay Christians is necessary especially when the matter involves discovering or inventing the means for permeating social, political, and economic realities with the demands of Christian doctrine and life. This initiative is a normal element of the life of the Church.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, № 899)