Friday of the Thirteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 9:9-13): As Jesus passed by, he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the customs post. He said to him, “Follow me.” And he got up and followed him. While he was at table in his house, many tax collectors and sinners came and sat with Jesus and his disciples. The Pharisees saw this and said to his disciples, “Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?” He heard this and said, “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do. Go and learn the meaning of the words, I desire mercy, not sacrifice. I did not come to call the righteous but sinners.”

“Follow me”

Deacon Fr. Josep MONTOYA Viñas
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Today, with this simple yet profound statement— “Follow me”—Jesus transforms the life of Matthew. A tax collector, a man rejected by his contemporaries, is looked upon with mercy and called by the Master.

This Gospel speaks to us of Jesus' gaze: a gaze that does not condemn but invites. We too, at some point in our lives, have heard this call. Perhaps not with audible words, but in the depths of our hearts: an invitation to leave our comfort zone and follow him on a path of conversion and service. What is Jesus asking of me now? What response do I want to give him?

Jesus doesn't expect us to be perfect before calling us. The Lord says to the Pharisees, faced with their discomfort: “Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do” (Mt 9:12). It is in our concrete reality, with our wounds and limitations, that He pleads “follow me.”

Pope Leo XIV, upon receiving the cardinal's biretta, said in his acceptance speech, addressing all the cardinals present: "Do not be afraid to say yes. Do not be afraid to open your heart to the possibility that the Lord is calling you..."

For Pope Leo, Christ's call is an invitation to open ourselves to the vocation of following him, with trust and without fear. This love is what moves Jesus to sit at table with sinners. And it is the same love that prompts us today to look upon others with mercy, not from a position of superiority, but from the desire that all may hear and respond to the call, because "I desire mercy, not sacrifice" (cf. Hos 6:6; Mt 9:13), the words we heard spoken by Jesus today.

May this Gospel renew our hearts and help us recognize the voice of Christ in our ordinary, daily lives.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “My sweet Lord, turn the eyes of Your mercy upon Your people; for You will be the more glorified if You pardon so many creatures.” (Saint Catherine of Siena)

- “Jesus Christ is the face of the Father’s mercy. Mercy: the word reveals the very mystery of the Most Holy Trinity. Mercy: the ultimate and supreme act by which God comes to meet us.” (Francis)

- “Jesus performed acts, such as pardoning sins, that manifested him to be the Savior God himself. Certain Jews, who did not recognize God made man, saw in him only a man who made himself God (Jn 10:33), and judged him as a blasphemer.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 594)

Other comments

”Follow me”

Fr. Pere CAMPANYÀ i Ribó
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Today, the Gospel speaks to us of a vocation, that of the publican Matthew. Jesus is preparing the small group of disciples who are to continue his work of salvation. He chooses whomever he wants: they will be fishermen, or those in a humble profession. He even calls a tax collector to follow him, a profession despised by the Jews—who considered themselves perfect observers of the law—because they saw it to close to a sinful life, since they collected taxes in the name of the Roman governor, to whom they did not want to submit.

Jesus' invitation is sufficient: "Follow me" (Mt 9:9). With a word from the Master, Matthew leaves his profession and happily invites him to his home to celebrate a banquet of thanksgiving. It was only natural that Matthew would have a group of good friends, from the same "professional branch," to accompany him and take part in the event. According to the Pharisees, all those people were publicly recognized sinners.

The Pharisees cannot remain silent and comment on this with some of Jesus' disciples: " Why does your teacher eat with tax collectors and sinners?" (Mt 9:10). Jesus' response is immediate: "Those who are well do not need a physician, but the sick do" (Mt 9:12). The comparison is perfect: "I did not come to call the righteous but sinners" (Mt 9:13).

The words of this Gospel are relevant today. Jesus continues to invite us to follow him, each according to his or her state and profession. And following Jesus often means giving up disordered passions, bad

family behavior, waste of time, in order to dedicate time to prayer, to the Eucharistic banquet, to missionary pastoral work. In short, "A Christian is not his own master, since all his time belongs to God" (Saint Ignatius of Antioch).

Certainly, Jesus is asking me to change my life, and so I ask myself: Which group am I part of, the perfect person or the one who sincerely acknowledges his flaws? Isn't it true that I can improve?