Tuesday of the Fifteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 11:20-24): Jesus began to reproach the towns where most of his mighty deeds had been done, since they had not repented. "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Tyre and Sidon on the day of judgment than for you. And as for you, Capernaum: Will you be exalted to heaven? You will go down to the netherworld. For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Sodom, it would have remained until this day. But I tell you, it will be more tolerable for the land of Sodom on the day of judgment than for you."

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!"

Fr. Damien LIN Yuanheng
(Singapore, Singapore)

Today, Christ upbraided two Galilean cities, Chorazin and Bethsaida, for their incredulities: "Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes" (Mt 11:21). Christ himself bore witness that the Phoenician cities, Tyre and Sidon, would have done penitence in great humility, if the wonders of the divine power had been done in them.

Nobody enjoys a good scolding. It must however be especially painful to be upbraided by Christ, who loves us with his most merciful heart. There is simply no excuse, no immunity when one is reprimanded by Truth itself. Let us receive humbly and responsibly God's call to conversion each day.

We also notice that Christ did not mince his words. He placed his audience face to

face with truth. We too have to take stock of the manner we speak to others about Christ. Often, we too have to fight against our human respect to put our friends before eternal truths such as death and judgment. Pope Francis wittingly described St. Paul as a "trouble-maker", he said: "May we not take refuge in an easy-going life or in an ephemeral structure (...). Paul, preaching the Lord, caused trouble. But he persisted, because he was a zealous Christian. He had apostolic zeal. He was not a man of compromise". Let us not shun from our duty of charity.

Perhaps, like me, you may find these words of St. Josemaria Escriva enlightening: "(...) It's a question (...) of speaking words of wisdom in clear Christian speech that all can understand." We should not just rest on the laurels because we are understood by many; rather, we have to beg for the grace to be the humble instrument of the Holy Spirit, in order to put each man and woman squarely before the Divine truth.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Nothing is so dear and loved by God as when men turn to him with true repentance." (Saint Maximus Confessor).
- "Jesus expresses his disgust at being attacked by his own people: 'If the miracles that were performed in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon'... In this severe, but also bitter comparison, the whole history of salvation can be seen." (Francis)
- "The human heart is heavy and hardened. God must give man a new heart (Cf. Ezek 36:26-27) (…)" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 1432)

Other comments

"Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida!"

Fr. Pedro-José YNARAJA i Díaz
(El Montanyà, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel speaks of God's historical judgment of Chorazín, Capernaum and other towns: “Woe to you, Chorazin! Woe to you, Bethsaida! For if the mighty deeds done in your midst had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would long ago have repented in sackcloth and ashes.” (Mt 11:21). Among their black ruins —all that is left out of them— I have been pondering over this passage. And I have not rejoiced over their failure. I thought: The Lord also went through our towns, our neighborhood our homes, and... did we pay any attention to him?, did I take notice of him?

With a stone in my hand, I told myself: something like this will be all that will remain from my historical existence, if I do not responsibly live the Lord's visit. I remembered the poet: “O soul, lean now out the window: and you will see that love, when calling, holds on”, and, ashamed, I admit having also answered: “Tomorrow he may enter,”... only tomorrow to respond the same!” (Lope de Vega).

When crossing the inhuman streets of some of our “commuter towns”, I wonder: what can be done to help these people whom I feel totally unable to establish a dialogue with, whom I cannot share my illusions with, whom it seems impossible to transmit God's love to? And then, I remember the motto St. Francis de Sales chose when he was appointed bishop of Geneva —the then maximum exponent of the Protestant Reformation: “Where God planted us, we must yearn to bloom.” And if, with a stone in my hand at times I wonder about God's strict judgment that may befall, at other times —with a little wild flower, born amongst the weeds and the manure in high mountains— I see that I should not lose Hope. I must reciprocate the goodness shown to me by God, and thus, what meager generosity I may place in the heart of whoever I am greeting, or the interested and attentive glance towards whoever is asking me some information, or just my smile of thanks addressed to whoever yields to let me through, will flourish in the future. And Faith will not be lost in our environment.