

Monday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 12,38-42): Some teachers of the Law and some Pharisees spoke up, «Teacher, we want to see a sign from you». Jesus answered them, «An evil and unfaithful people want a sign, but no sign will be given them except the sign of the prophet Jonah. In the same way that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the monster fish, so will the Son of Man spend three days and three nights in the depths of the earth. At the judgment, the people of Niniveh will rise with this generation and condemn it, because they reformed their lives at the preaching of Jonah, and here there is greater than Jonah. At the judgment, the Queen of the South will stand up and condemn you. She came from the ends of the earth to listen to the wisdom of Solomon, and here there is greater than Solomon».

«Teacher, we want to see a sign from you»

Fr. Joel PIRES Teixeira
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Today, Jesus is tested by 'some teachers of the law and Pharisees' (Mt 12:38; cf. Mc 10; 12), who feel threatened by his person, not because of reasons of faith, but of power. Fearing to lose their influence, they seek to discredit Jesus, by needling Him. These "some" can be quite often ourselves, when we are led by our selfishness and individual interests. Or, just as well, when we look at the Church as a merely human reality and not as a project of God's love for each one of us.

Jesus' answer is sharp: «but none will be given» (cf. Mt 12:39), not by fear, but to emphasize and remind them that the "signs" are the relationship of communication and love between God and humanity; it is not an association of interests and individual powers. Jesus evokes that there are many signs given by God; and it is not by challenging or blackmailing Him that He can be reached.

Jesus is the greatest signal. On this day the Word is an invitation for each one of us to humbly understand that only a converted heart turned towards God, can receive, interpret, and see this sign which is Jesus. Humility is the reality that not only brings us closer to God, but also to humanity. Through humility we acknowledge our limitations and virtues, but mostly we see our neighbors as brothers and God as our Father.

As Pope Francis reminded us, "The Lord is patient with us! He never tires of starting over again each time we fall ". That is why, despite our faults and incitements, the Lord welcomes us with open arms to start all over again. Let us, therefore, try to accomplish that in our life, and particularly today, this Word becomes a reality in us. The joy of the Christian is to be recognized by the love that is seen in his life, love that springs from Jesus.

Other comments

«Teacher, we want to see a sign from you»

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Today, in the Gospel, we may contemplate how some teachers of the Law and some Pharisees want Jesus to prove his divine origin with some prodigious sign (cf. Mt 12:38). He had previously offered plenty, more than enough to prove not only his provenance from God, but also that He himself was God. But, despite the many miracles made, they had not enough: no matter how many He had made, they would not believe him.

By taking advantage of a prodigious sign from the Old Testament, Jesus, with prophetic emphasis, announces his death, burial and resurrection: «In the same way that Jonah spent three days and three nights in the belly of the monster fish, so will the Son of Man spend three days and three nights in the depths of the earth» (Mt 12:40), and will rise full of life.

The people of Nineveh recovered their friendship with God, through their spiritual rebirth and self-abasement. We, too, through spiritual rebirth, penance and baptism, have been buried with Christ, and for him and in him we live, now and forever, having taken a true "paschal" step: step from death to life, from sin to grace. Free from devil's slavery, we become sons of God. He is "the great prodigy"

illustrating our faith and hopes to live with love, as God commands, and to be able to fully possess the Love of God.

A great prodigy, Jesus' Passover, as much as ours, because of our Baptism. Nobody has seen them, for Jesus rose from the Sepulcher full of life, and we rose from sin, full of divine life. We believe in it and we live while we avoid falling in the incredulity of those that want to see to believe, or of those that would like to see the Church without the opacity of all humans that make it. Let the Paschal mystery of Christ that so deeply affects all humans and the whole creation, to be enough for us, for it is the reason of so many “miracles of God's grace”.

God's Mother trusted God's Word, and she did not have to run out to the sepulcher to embalm the body of her Son and to verify the sepulcher empty: she simply believed and she “saw”.