Monday of the Sixteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 12:38-42): Some of the scribes and Pharisees said to Jesus, “Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.” He said to them in reply, “An evil and unfaithful generation seeks a sign, but no sign will be given it except the sign of Jonah the prophet. Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights. At the judgment, the men of Nineveh will arise with this generation and condemn it, because they repented at the preaching of Jonah; and there is something greater than Jonah here. At the judgment the queen of the south will arise with this generation and condemn it, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and there is something greater than Solomon here.”

“Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”

Fr. Joel PIRES Teixeira
(Faro, Portugal)

Today, Jesus is tested by “some teachers of the law and Pharisees” (Mt 12:38), who feel threatened by him, not because of reasons of faith, but of power. Fearing they will lose their influence, they seek to discredit Jesus by provoking Him. At times, we may do this too, when we are led by our selfishness and individual interests; or, likewise, when we look at the Church as a mere 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). He responds not out of fear, but to emphasize and remind them that the "signs" are evidence of the communication and love that exist between God and humanity; they are not merely manifestations of interests and individual powers. Jesus shows 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 sign. 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 sisters, and God as our Father.

As Pope Francis reminds 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 shortcomings, the Lord welcomes us with open arms to start

all over again. Let us, therefore, try to make the Word a reality in our lives, starting today!

The joy of the Christian is to be recognized by the love that is seen in his or her life —love that springs from Jesus.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “God [the Son] did not impede death from separating his soul from his body according to the necessary order of nature, but has reunited them to one another in the Resurrection, so that he himself might be, in his person, the meeting point for death and life.” (Gregory of Nyssa)

- “The sign which Jesus promises is his forgiveness, through his death and resurrection. The sign which Jesus promises is his mercy. The true sign of Jonah is the one that gives us confidence in being saved by the blood of Christ." (Francis)

- “Baptism, the original and full sign of which is immersion, efficaciously signifies the descent into the tomb by the Christian who dies to sin with Christ in order to live a new life (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 628)

Other comments

“Teacher, we wish to see a sign from you.”

Fr. Lluís ROQUÉ i Roqué
(Manresa, Barcelona, Spain)

Today we may contemplate in the Gospel 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: “Just as Jonah was in the belly of the whale three days and three nights, so will the Son of Man be in the heart of the earth three days and three nights” (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 the 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 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”.