

Monday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 17:22-27): As Jesus and his disciples were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, "The Son of Man is to be handed over to men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day." And they were overwhelmed with grief.

When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the temple tax approached Peter and said, "Does not your teacher pay the temple tax?" "Yes," he said. When he came into the house, before he had time to speak, Jesus asked him, "What is your opinion, Simon? From whom do the kings of the earth take tolls or census tax? From their subjects or from foreigners?" When he said, "From foreigners," Jesus said to him, "Then the subjects are exempt. But that we may not offend them, go to the sea, drop in a hook, and take the first fish that comes up. Open its mouth and you will find a coin worth twice the temple tax. Give that to them for me and for you."

“Jesus and his disciples were gathering in Galilee”

Fr. Joaquim PETIT Llimona, L.C.
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the liturgy offers different possibilities for us to consider. Amongst these we could, perhaps, stop in something implicit throughout the text: Jesus' familiar attitude with his disciples.

St. Matthew says that “Jesus and his disciples were gathering in Galilee” (Mt 17:22). Though it is quite evident, the fact the Evangelist deems it necessary to mention it seems to emphasize the nearness of Jesus Christ. Shortly afterwards,

Jesus opens His heart to make them aware of his Passion, Death and Resurrection. That is, of something He had been keeping inside himself but He does not want to conceal any longer from those He loves so much. Still further, the text mentions the tax payment episode, and, here too, the Evangelist shows us Jesus' demeanor with them, by placing himself at Peter's level, and contrasting the tax-free sons (Jesus and Peter) to the others, who must pay. Finally, Christ shows Peter how to get the necessary monies to pay, not only for Him, but for both of them and, thus, avoid any scandal.

In all these traits we may discover a fundamental vision of our Christian life: Jesus' desire to remain with us. In the book of Proverbs the Lord says: “Playing over the whole of his earth, having my delight with human beings” (Pr 8:31). It is amazing how this reality may change our approach to our spiritual life where, at times, we only pay attention to what we do, as if that was the most important part of it...! Our interior life must be centered in Christ, in his love for us, in his dying on the Cross for me, in his constant search of our heart. Saint John Paul II expressed it very well back in 1982, in his meeting with the youth in Spain, when he said, out loud: “Look at Him!”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“His passion is our resurrection.” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

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“A new worship is being introduced, in a Temple not built by human hands. This Temple is his body, the Risen One, who gathers the peoples and unites them in the sacrament of his body and blood.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Jesus venerated the Temple by going up to it for the Jewish feasts of pilgrimage, and with a jealous love he loved this dwelling of God among men. The Temple prefigures his own mystery. When he announces its destruction, it is as a manifestation of his own execution and of the entry into a new age in the history of salvation, when his Body would be the definitive Temple.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, N° 593)