

Monday of the Nineteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 17,22-27): On day when they were together in Galilee, Jesus said to his disciples, «The Son of Man will be delivered into human hands, and they will kill him. But He will rise on the third day». The Twelve were deeply grieved.

When they returned to Capernaum, the Temple tax collectors came to Peter and asked him, «Does your master pay the temple tax?». He answered, «Certainly». Peter then entered the house, but immediately Jesus asked him, «What do you think, Simon? Who pay taxes or tributes to the kings of the earth: their sons or the other people?». Peter replied, «The others». And Jesus told him, «The sons, then, are tax-free. But so as not to offend these people, go to the sea, throw in a hook and open the mouth of the first fish you catch. You will find a coin in it, take it and let it pay for you and for me».

«When they were together in Galilee»

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Today, the liturgy offers, for us to consider, different possibilities. 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 together 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 counterposing 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: «Rejoicing in his whole world and delighting in mankind» (Pr 8:31). 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. In one meeting with the youth, in Spain, saint John Paul II expressed it very well, when he said, out loud: «Look at Him!».