

Twentieth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

Gospel text (Lk 12:49-53): Jesus said to his disciples: "I have come to set the earth on fire, and how I wish it were already blazing!

There is a baptism with which I must be baptized, and how great is my anguish until it is accomplished! Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division. From now on a household of five will be divided, three against two and two against three; a father will be divided against his son and a son against his father, a mother against her daughter and a daughter against her mother, a mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law."

"Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth?"

Fr. Isidre SALUDES i Rebull
(Alforja, Tarragona, Spain)

Today, —from Jesus' very lips— we can hear the frightening avowal: "I have come to set the earth on fire" (Lk 12:49); "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you" (Lk 12:51). Being faithful to God entails division. For truth is opposed to lies and deception; the spirit of charity is the opposite of a selfish spirit; justice is the opposite of injustice...

In the world —and inside us— there is a mixture of good and bad; and we must take sides, must make a choice, while being conscious that faithfulness is "uncomfortable". It seems far easier to be flexible, but it is certainly far less evangelical.

We would like to have "the Gospels" and "a Jesus" tailored to measure and going by our individual taste and passions. But we must convince ourselves that Christian life is not just a simple "routine", a matter of "just keep going", without a constant desire for improvement and perfection. Benedict XVI affirms that "Jesus Christ is not just a private conviction or an abstract idea, but a real person, whose becoming part of human history is capable of renewing the life of every man and woman."

The supreme model is Jesus (we must “stare at Him fixedly”, especially when in trouble or if persecuted). He voluntarily accepted the ordeal of the Cross in order to restore our freedom and recover our happiness: “In his crucified flesh, God's freedom and our human freedom met definitively in an inviolable, eternally valid pact” (Benedict XVI). If we have Jesus on our minds we shall never lose heart. His sacrifice represents the opposite to the spiritual lack of enthusiasm, which so often engulfs us.

Loyalty requires courage and ascetical fight. Sin and evil are constantly tempting us, and this is why a courageous fight and effort along with our participation in the Passion of Jesus Christ are a peremptory requirement. Hating sin is not easy. The kingdom of Heaven demands effort, fight and violence upon us, and the violent take it by force (cf. Mt 11:12).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

-

“Let us allow that fire to burn our lives. Let us feed the desire to spread that divine fire throughout the world, making it known to all the people around us. They too can experience the peace of Christ and find happiness there.” (Saint Josemaría Escrivá)

-

“The fire that Jesus speaks of is the fire of the Holy Spirit, the presence living and working in us from the day of our Baptism. Jesus wants the Holy Spirit to blaze like fire in our heart” (Francis)

-

“In his Passover Christ opened to all men the fountain of Baptism. He had already spoken of his Passion, which he was about to suffer in Jerusalem, as a "Baptism" with which he had to be baptized. The blood and water that flowed from the pierced side of the crucified Jesus are types of Baptism and the Eucharist (...)" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1225)