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
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Today we hear shocking statements from the lips of Jesus: "I have come to set the earth on fire" (Luke 12:49); "Do you think that I have come to establish peace on the earth? No, I tell you, but rather division" (Luke 12:51). The truth divides in the face of lies; charity in the face of selfishness, justice in the face of injustice...

In the world—and within us—there is a mixture of good and evil; and we must take sides, make choices, being aware that fidelity is "uncomfortable." It seems easier to compromise, but at the same time it is less evangelical.

We are tempted to tailor a "gospel" and a "Jesus" to our liking, according to our tastes and passions. We must convince ourselves that the Christian life cannot be pure routine, a "getting by" process, without a constant desire for improvement and perfection. Benedict XVI affirmed 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 “keep our eyes fixed on Him,” especially in difficulties and persecutions). He voluntarily accepted the torment of the Cross 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 keep Jesus in mind, we will not allow ourselves to be discouraged. His sacrifice represents the opposite of the spiritual lukewarmness into which we often settle.

Faithfulness demands courage and ascetic struggle. Sin and evil constantly tempt us: that is why struggle, courageous effort, and participation in Christ's Passion are necessary. Hatred of sin is not a peaceful thing. The kingdom of heaven demands effort, struggle, and violence within ourselves, and those who make this effort are those who conquer it (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)