

Monday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 19:16-22): A young man approached Jesus and said, “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” He answered him, “Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments.” He asked him, “Which ones?” And Jesus replied, “You shall not kill; you shall not commit adultery; you shall not steal; you shall not bear false witness; honor your father and your mother; and you shall love your neighbor as yourself.” The young man said to him, “All of these I have observed. What do I still lack?” Jesus said to him, “If you wish to be perfect, go, sell what you have and give to the poor, and you will have treasure in heaven. Then come, follow me.” When the young man heard this statement, he went away sad, for he had many possessions.

“Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?”

Fr. Óscar MAIXÉ i Altés
(Roma, Italy)

Today, the liturgy of the Word submits to our consideration the famous passage of the rich young man, that young man that did not succeed in reacting to the eye-beaming look Jesus Christ cast at him (cf. Mk 10:21). Saint John Paul II reminded us that we can recognize in that young man all those that approach Jesus Christ by asking him about the meaning of their own lives: “Teacher, what good must I do to gain eternal life?” (Mt 19:16). The pope commented that “The young man senses that there is a connection between moral good and the fulfilment of his own destiny.”

Today, too, how many ask themselves that same question! If we look around us, we may think there are not that many who can see beyond, or, perhaps, that the 21st century man does not need that type of questions, being the answers are no good enough for him.

Jesus answers him: “Why do you ask me about the good? There is only One who is good. If you wish to enter into life, keep the commandments” (Mt 19:17). It is not only quite legitimate to wonder about the beyond, about the meaning of life, but... we must do it! The young man has asked what he must do to receive eternal life, and Jesus Christ has answered that he must be good.

For some, or for many —it does not really matter— nowadays it may seem impossible ‘to be good’ ... Or it may seem something with little sense: a piece of nonsense, in fact! But, today, as well as twenty centuries ago, Jesus Christ keeps on reminding us that to enter eternal life we must keep the Commandments of the Law of God: it is not the “A” mark we can aim to, but the only way for us to resemble God so that we may enter the eternal life hand in hand with our Father-God. Actually, “Jesus shows that the commandments must not be understood as a minimum limit not to be gone beyond, but rather as a path involving a moral and spiritual journey towards perfection, at the heart of which is love” (Saint John Paul II).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “If you are not master of yourself — though you may be powerful — your air of mastery moves me to pity and laughter.” (Saint Josemaría)
- “Jesus shows that the commandments must not be understood as a minimum limit not to be gone beyond, but rather as a path involving a moral and spiritual journey towards perfection, at the heart of which is love.” (Saint John Paul II)
- “‘Teacher, what good deed must I do, to have eternal life?’ To the young man who asked this question, Jesus answers first by invoking the necessity to recognize God (..) as the supreme Good (...). Then Jesus tells him: ‘If you would enter life, keep the commandments’ (...). Finally Jesus sums up these commandments positively: ‘You shall love your neighbor as Yourself’” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 2052)