

Saturday of the Twentieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 23:1-12): Jesus spoke to the crowds and to his disciples, saying, “The scribes and the Pharisees have taken their seat on the chair of Moses. Therefore, do and observe all things whatsoever they tell you, but do not follow their example. For they preach but they do not practice. They tie up heavy burdens hard to carry and lay them on people’s shoulders, but they will not lift a finger to move them. All their works are performed to be seen. They widen their phylacteries and lengthen their tassels. They love places of honor at banquets, seats of honor in synagogues, greetings in marketplaces, and the salutation ‘Rabbi.’

As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’ You have but one teacher, and you are all brothers. Call no one on earth your father; you have but one Father in heaven. Do not be called ‘Master’; you have but one master, the Christ. The greatest among you must be your servant. Whoever exalts himself will be humbled; but whoever humbles himself will be exalted.”

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Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, once more, Jesus Christ presents to us a request for humility, an invitation to position ourselves in the true place we belong: “As for you, do not be called ‘Rabbi.’... Neither should you call anyone on earth Father... Nor should you be called leader” (Mt 23:8-10). Before assuming all these titles let us try to thank God, for we have received from Him whatever we have.

As St. Paul says “Who confers distinction upon you? What do you possess that you have not received? But if you have received it, why are you boasting as if you did not receive it?” (1Co 4:7). So, when we are conscious of having correctly behaved, it would do us good to repeat: “We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do” (Lk 17:10).

Modern men are undergoing a regrettable amnesia: we live and behave as if we should have been the generators of life and creators of the world. In direct contrast, though, Aristotle is to be admired. In his natural theology he ignores the concept of “creation” (concept known in those times only by Divine Revelation), but, at least, he had quite clear in his mind this world depended on the Divinity (the “Uncaused cause”). Saint John Paul II appeals to us to remember what we owe to God: “Man must honor his Creator by offering him, in praise and thanksgiving, whatever he has received from Him. Man cannot lose this sense of duty, which only he may recognize, amongst all other earthly realities.”

Besides, thinking of the everlasting life, our cooperation —He will not do anything without our permission nor without our effort! Consists of not disturbing the Holy Spirit's labor: to let God do it!; for saintliness is not “manufactured” by us, but granted by him, who is Master, Father and Leader. In any case, if we do believe we have something to offer, let us hasten to put it at the service of our fellow men: “The greatest among you must be your servant” (Mt 23:11).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“For what can be more wretched than a teacher, when the preservation of his disciples is, not to give heed to his life? Our actions will persuade them sooner than any discourse” (Saint John Chrysostom)

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“The real novelty of the New Testament lies not so much in new ideas as in the figure of Christ himself, who gives flesh and blood to those concepts—an unprecedented realism” (Benedict XVI)

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"By his obedience to Mary and Joseph, as well as by his humble work during the long years in Nazareth, Jesus gives us the example of holiness in the daily life of family and work" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 564)