Tuesday of the Second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 2:23-28): As he was passing through a field of grain on the sabbath, his disciples began to make a path while picking the heads of grain. At this the Pharisees said to him, “Look, why are they doing what is unlawful on the sabbath?” He said to them, “Have you never read what David did when he was in need and he and his companions were hungry? How he went into the house of God when Abiathar was high priest and ate the bread of offering that only the priests could lawfully eat, and shared it with his companions?” Then he said to them, “The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath. That is why the Son of Man is lord even of the sabbath.”

“The sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”

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Today, as yesterday, Jesus must contend with the Pharisees, who have distorted the Law of Moses, focusing on trivialities and forgetting the spirit that informs it. The Pharisees, in fact, accuse Jesus' disciples of violating the Sabbath (cf. Mk 2:24). According to their burdensome casuistry, plucking ears of grain is equivalent to "reaping," and threshing means "beating": these agricultural tasks—and about forty more that we could add—were forbidden on the Sabbath, the day of rest. As we already know, the bread of offering that the Gospel speaks of were twelve loaves that were placed each week on the table of the sanctuary, as a tribute from the twelve tribes of Israel to their God and Lord.

Abiathar's attitude is the same one that Jesus teaches us today: the less important precepts of the Law must yield to the greater ones; a ceremonial precept must yield to a precept of natural law; the precept of Sabbath rest is therefore not above the basic needs of subsistence. The Second Vatican Council, inspired by the passage we are commenting on, and to emphasize that the person must be above economic and social issues, says: "The social order and its development must invariably work to the benefit of the human person if the disposition of affairs is to be subordinate to the personal realm and not contrariwise, as the Lord indicated when He said that the Sabbath was made for man, and not man for the Sabbath (cf. Mk 2:27)."

Saint Augustine tells us: " Love and do what you will." Have we understood this correctly, or does the obsession with what is secondary still stifle the love that we must put into everything we do? Working, forgiving, correcting, going to Mass on Sundays, caring for the sick, keeping the commandments... do we

do it because we have to or out of love for God? Hopefully, these considerations will help us to enliven all our works with the love that the Lord has placed in our hearts, precisely so that we may love Him.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Those who were brought up in the ancient order of things have come to the possession of a new hope, no longer observing the Sabbath, but living in the observance of the Lord's Day, on which also our life has sprung up again by Him and by His death.” (Saint Ignatius of Antioch)

- “Sabbath intends to participate in the rest and with the peace of God. But when man refuses the ‘leisure of God’ (worshipping) then he becomes a ‘business slave’.” (Benedict XVI)

- “Sunday is expressly distinguished from the sabbath which it follows chronologically every week; for Christians its ceremonial observance replaces that of the sabbath. In Christ's Passover, Sunday fulfills the spiritual truth of the Jewish sabbath and announces man's eternal rest in God.” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 2175)