Saturday of the Twenty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 6:1-5): While Jesus was going through a field of grain on a Sabbath, his disciples were picking the heads of grain, rubbing them in their hands, and eating them. Some Pharisees said, “Why are you doing what is unlawful on the Sabbath?” Jesus said to them in reply, “Have you not read what David did when he and those who were with him were hungry? How he went into the house of God, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions?” Then he said to them, “The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath.”

“The Son of Man is lord of the Sabbath”

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Today, in response to the accusation of the Pharisees, Jesus explains the true meaning of Sabbath rest, invoking an example from the Old Testament (cf. Dt 23:26): “Have you not read what David did (…)? He went into the house of God, took the bread of offering, which only the priests could lawfully eat, ate of it, and shared it with his companions” (Lk 6:3-4).

David’s action foreshadowed the teaching Christ imparts in this passage. Already in the Old Testament, God had established a hierarchy within the precepts of the Law, so that those of lesser weight yielded before those of greater importance.

In this light, we understand how a ceremonial precept (such as the one mentioned here) could give way to a precept of natural law. In the same way, the law of the Sabbath does not stand above man’s most basic needs for survival.

Here Christ teaches the true meaning of God’s institution of the Sabbath: it was given for man’s good—that he might rest and dedicate himself with peace and joy to divine worship. The Pharisees’ interpretation had turned this day into a source of anxiety and scrupulosity, burdened with a multitude of prescriptions and prohibitions.

The Sabbath was made not only for man’s rest, but also so that man might give glory to God. This is the authentic sense of the expression: “The Sabbath was made for man…” (Mk 2:27).

Moreover, in declaring Himself “Lord of the Sabbath” (cf. Lk 6:5), Christ openly manifests that He is the very God who first gave the commandment to Israel, thereby affirming both His divinity and His universal authority. For this reason, He can establish new laws, just as Yahweh did in the Old Testament. Jesus can rightly be called “Lord of the Sabbath,” for He is truly God.

Let us ask the Virgin Mary to help us believe and understand that the Sabbath belongs to God and is given as a means—adapted to our human nature—of offering glory and honor to the Almighty. As Saint John Paul II reminds us, “our rest is a ‘sacred’ thing” and an occasion to “realize that everything is the work of God.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "In this time of grace, the Christian observes a perpetual Sabbath if he dedicates himself to holy works in the hope of future rest" (Saint Augustine)

- "Living in accordance with the Lord's Day" means living in the awareness of the liberation brought by Christ and making our lives a constant self-offering to God” (Benedict XVI)

- “The celebration of Sunday observes the moral commandment inscribed by nature in the human heart to render to God an outward, visible, public, and regular worship "as a sign of his universal beneficence to all." (Catechism of the Church Catholic, no. 2,176)