

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”

Fr. Austin Chukwuemeka IHEKWEME
(Ikenanzizi, Nigeria)

Today, responding to the Pharisees' accusation, Jesus explains the correct meaning of the Sabbath, while quoting an example from the Old Testament (cf. Deut 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 behavior anticipates the doctrine Christ teaches in this passage. God had already established in the Old Testament an order for the precepts of the Law, whereby those of less rank would yield to the main ones.

In the light of all this, it can be understood that a ceremonial precept (as the one we are commenting on) yields to a precept of the natural law. The precept of Sabbath, likewise, is not more important than the elementary needs of subsistence.

In this passage, Christ teaches the meaning of the divine institution of the Sabbath: God had instituted it to man's benefit, so that he could rest and devote his time with peace and joy to the divine worship. However, the Pharisees' interpretation had

transformed this day into a day of anguish and worrying because of the many directions and prohibitions.

The Sabbath had been set up not only for man's rest, but also to glorify God: this is the actual and true meaning of the expression “The Sabbath was made for man...” (Mk 2:27).

Furthermore, by declaring Himself “Lord of the Sabbath” (cf. Lk 6:5), He openly manifests that He is the very same God who gave the precept to the people of Israel, thus confirming His divinity and His universal power. For this reason, other laws can be established, just as Yahweh did in the Old Testament. Jesus can therefore be called “Lord of the Sabbath”, because He is God.

Let us beg the Virgin Mother of God to help us believe and understand that the Sabbath belongs to God and that it is a way —adapted to our own nature— to glorify and honour the Almighty. As Saint John Paul II wrote: “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)