Monday of the Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 6:6-11): On a certain Sabbath Jesus went into the synagogue and taught, and there was a man there whose right hand was withered. The scribes and the Pharisees watched him closely to see if he would cure on the Sabbath so that they might discover a reason to accuse him. But he realized their intentions and said to the man with the withered hand, “Come up and stand before us.” And he rose and stood there. Then Jesus said to them, “I ask you, is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?” Looking around at them all, he then said to him, “Stretch out your hand.” He did so and his hand was restored. But they became enraged and discussed together what they might do to Jesus.

“Come up and stand before us… Stretch out your hand”

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Today, Jesus sets an example of freedom for us. We talk about it so much nowadays. But unlike what is proclaimed today—and even experienced—as “freedom,” the freedom Jesus speaks of is one that is entirely associated with and united to the Father’s action. He himself says: “I say to you, a son cannot do anything on his own, but only what he sees his father doing; for what he does, his son will do also” (Jn 5:19). And the Father works and acts solely out of love.

Love does not impose itself, yet it spurs action; it mobilizes, restoring life in abundance. That command of Jesus — “Come up and stand before us” (Lk 6:8) — possesses the renewing power of the One who loves and who acts through His word. Furthermore, the other command — “Stretch out your hand” (Lk 6:10) — which ultimately brings about the miracle, definitively restores strength and life to what was weak and dead. “To save” means to snatch from death, and it is the very same word translated as “to heal.” By healing him, Jesus restored what was dead within that poor, sick man, and that is a clear sign of God the Father’s love for His creatures. Thus, in the new creation — where the Son does nothing other than what he sees the Father do — the prevailing law will be that of love put into action, and not that of a rest that renders one “inactive,” even when it comes to doing good for a brother in need.

Today, then, freedom and love are the key: freedom and love lived as Jesus lived them. Saint Augustine’s maxim — “Love, and do what you will” — remains fully relevant today, guiding us to be wholly conformed to Christ the Savior.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The project of God goes beyond man’s capacity to know or to understand, while on the contrary only He may know our thoughts, our actions, and even our future” (Saint John Damascene)

- "Without the idea of the Redeemer we cannot bear the truth of our own guilt and we appeal to the first deception: our blind obstinacy in front of this guilt, from which all other deceptions are born, to end up with our total incapacity to face the truth” (Benedict XVI)

- “... With compassion, Christ declares the Sabbath for doing good rather than harm, for saving life rather than killing (Mk 3:4). The Sabbath is the day of the Lord of mercies and a day to honor God. "The Son of Man is lord even of the Sabbath (Mk 2:28)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 2,173)