

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 provides us with an example of the freedom, which we speak so much about. But, contrary to what most claim or consider as “freedom”, Jesus' freedom, is totally associated with and adhered to the Father's actions. He will say: “Amen, amen, 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 only does and acts out of love.

Love cannot be imposed but forces us to act, pulls us together and restores life totally. Jesus' command: “Come up and stand before us” (Lk 6:8) has the vivifying strength of he who loves and responds to the Word. And, the last part of His order: “Stretch out your hand” (Lk 6:10), that concludes the miracle, definitely restores life and strength to what was powerless and dead. “To save” is to draw from death, and this same word translates as “healing”. By healing, Jesus is restoring what was

dead in that poor sick man, and this is a clear sign of God's fatherly love for his creatures. Thus, in the new creation, where the Son does only what He sees His Father doing, the new law that will prevail will be the law of the acting love rather than that of a “dormant” relaxation, including doing good to a brother in need.

Therefore, a conjugated freedom and love is the key for today. Freedom and love conjugated Jesus' way. Today, what St. Augustine used to say: “love and do as you please”, is perfectly valid in that we learn to totally identify ourselves with Christ our 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, n° 2,173)