Wednesday of the Second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 3:1-6): Jesus entered the synagogue. There was a man there who had a withered hand. They watched Jesus closely to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him. He said to the man with the withered hand, "Come up here before us." Then he said to the Pharisees, "Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?" But they remained silent. Looking around at them with anger and grieved at their hardness of heart, Jesus said to the man, "Stretch out your hand." He stretched it out and his hand was restored. The Pharisees went out and immediately took counsel with the Herodians against him to put him to death.

"Is it lawful to do good on the Sabbath rather than to do evil, to save life rather than to destroy it?"

Fr. Joaquim MESEGUER García
(Rubí, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, Jesus tells us we must always do good: There is no such thing as a time to do good and a time to overlook our love for others. The love we receive through God brings us to the supreme Law that Jesus left us in the new commandment: "Love one another. As I have loved you, so you also should love one another" (Jn 13:34). Jesus neither repeals nor criticizes Moses' Law, inasmuch as He is the first to comply with its precepts and go to the synagogue on the Sabbath; rather, what Jesus criticizes is the narrow-minded version of the Law espoused by its masters and the Pharisees, an interpretation leaving little room for mercy.

Jesus Christ has come to proclaim the Gospel of salvation, but His antagonists, far from being convinced, seek to find all kinds of pretexts against him: "There was a man there who had a withered hand. They watched Jesus closely to see if he would cure him on the Sabbath so that they might accuse him" (Mk 3:1-2). At the same time as we witness the power of grace, we also witness the hardheartedness of those boastful men, who believe they have the truth on their side. Were those Pharisees joyful upon realizing that poor man's withered hand had been cured? Certainly not; quite the opposite, they were even more blinded, to the point of rushing to make a deal with Herod's supporters —their natural foes— looking for a way to destroy Jesus. Curious alliance!

With His action, Jesus also removes the chains with which the masters of the Law and the Pharisees had constrained the Sabbath, while conferring it its true meaning: the day of communion between God and man, the day of liberation from slavery, the day of salvation from evil forces. Saint Augustine tells us: "He

who has peace in the conscience, is peaceful, and this very peace is his heart's Sabbath.” With Jesus Christ, the Sabbath already foreshadows the gift of Sunday.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "For as there was in Him a true human body and a true human soul, so was there also a true human emotion. When, therefore, we read in the Gospel that the hard-heartedness of the Jews moved Him to sorrowful indignation, these emotions are certainly not falsely ascribed to Him.” (Saint Augustine)

- “Another reason the heart becomes hardened is becoming closed inside oneself: making a world within oneself. These “religious narcissists” have hard hearts, they try to protect themselves with these walls they build around themselves.” (Francis)

- “The Gospel reports many incidents when Jesus was accused of violating the sabbath law. But Jesus never fails to respect the holiness of this day (Cf. Mk 1:21; Jn 9:16). He gives this law its authentic and authoritative interpretation: ‘The sabbath was made for man, not man for the sabbath’ (Mk 2:27)." (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 2173)