Saturday of the Twenty-third Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 6:43-49): Jesus said to his disciples: “A good tree does not bear rotten fruit, nor does a rotten tree bear good fruit. For every tree is known by its own fruit. For people do not pick figs from thornbushes, nor do they gather grapes from brambles. A good person out of the store of goodness in his heart produces good, but an evil person out of a store of evil produces evil; for from the fullness of the heart the mouth speaks.

“Why do you call me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ but not do what I command? I will show you what someone is like who comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them. That one is like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock; when the flood came, the river burst against that house but could not shake it because it had been well built. But the one who listens and does not act is like a person who built a house on the ground without a foundation. When the river burst against it, it collapsed at once and was completely destroyed.”

“Every tree is known by its own fruit”

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Today, the Lord surprises us by doing a bit of “advertising” for Himself. Now, I don’t mean to scandalize anyone with that statement. What diminishes great and supernatural realities is our earthly kind of advertising. We tend to look at advertising with suspicion because it often promises the impossible: “Lose five or six pounds in just a few weeks with this miracle product!” or other such “too-good-to-be-true” claims.

But when Someone has a “product” that is guaranteed one hundred percent, and—like the Lord—doesn’t sell it for money but simply asks us to believe in Him and take Him as our guide and model for a very specific way of life, then that kind of “advertising” shouldn’t surprise us. In fact, it’s the most legitimate kind of advertising in the world. Wasn’t Jesus the greatest “advertiser” of all when He declared about Himself: “I am the way and the truth and the life” (Jn 14:6)?

Today He tells us that whoever “comes to me, listens to my words, and acts on them” is wise—“like a man building a house, who dug deeply and laid the foundation on rock” (Lk 6:47-48). That house stands strong

and solid, able to withstand the pounding storms. On the other hand, the one who builds without that kind of wisdom will soon find himself surrounded by rubble. And if he happened to be inside when the floodwaters struck, he would not only lose his home but possibly his very life.

But it’s not enough to simply come near to Jesus. We need to listen attentively to His teaching and, above all, put it into practice. After all, the merely curious may also draw near to Him, as might the heretic, the historian, or the student of languages. But it is only by coming close, listening carefully, and most importantly, living out the doctrine of Jesus that we can build up the true edifice of Christian holiness—for the encouragement of fellow pilgrims and for the glory of the heavenly Church.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “The evangelical precepts, beloved brethren, are nothing else than divine teachings,—foundations on which hope is to be built, supports to strengthen faith, nourishments for cheering the heart, rudders for guiding our way, guards for obtaining salvation,—which, while they instruct the docile minds of believers on the earth, lead them to heavenly kingdoms.” (Saint Cyprian)

- “Be prudent and wise, build your lives upon the firm foundation which is Christ. Then you will be blessed and happy and your happiness will influence others.” (Benedict XVI)

- “(...) The precepts of the Decalogue lay the foundations for the vocation of man fashioned in the image of God; they prohibit what is contrary to the love of God and neighbor and prescribe what is essential to it (...)” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 1962)