Friday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 12:54-59): Jesus said to the crowds, “When you see a cloud rising in the west you say immediately that it is going to rain—and so it does; and when you notice that the wind is blowing from the south you say that it is going to be hot—and so it is. You hypocrites! You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time? “Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right? If you are to go with your opponent before a magistrate, make an effort to settle the matter on the way; otherwise your opponent will turn you over to the judge, and the judge hand you over to the constable, and the constable throw you into prison. I say to you, you will not be released until you have paid the last penny.”

"Why do you not know how to interpret the present time? Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?"

Fr. Frederic RÀFOLS i Vidal
(Barcelona, Spain)

Today. Jesus wants us to lift our eyes toward heaven. This morning, after three days of steady rain, the sky appeared bright and clear—one of the most splendid days of this autumn. We’ve become quite good at understanding changes in the weather; meteorologists have practically become part of the family. Yet we find it much harder to understand the times we are living in: “You know how to interpret the appearance of the earth and the sky; why do you not know how to interpret the present time?” (Lk 12:56). Many of those who listened to Jesus let a unique moment in all of human history pass them by. They did not recognize in Jesus the Son of God. They failed to see the time, the hour of salvation.

The Second Vatican Council, in the Constitution Gaudium et Spes (no. 4), brings today’s Gospel into our own era: “The Church has always had the duty of scrutinizing the signs of the times and of interpreting them in the light of the Gospel (…). We must therefore recognize and understand the world in which we live, its explanations, its longings, and its often dramatic characteristics.”

When we look back at history, it’s not difficult to point out the opportunities the Church has missed because she did not recognize the moment she was living in. But, Lord, how many opportunities might we be missing now by not discerning the signs of the times—or, in other words, by not living and illuminating today’s challenges with the light of the Gospel? “Why do you not judge for yourselves what is right?” (Lk 12:57), Jesus reminds us again today.

We do not live in an evil world, even though there is plenty of evil in it. God has not abandoned His creation. As Saint John of the Cross reminded us, we dwell in a land where God Himself once walked and filled with beauty. Saint Teresa of Calcutta recognized the signs of the times—and our time has, in turn, recognized her. May she inspire us. Let us never cease to look upward toward heaven, without losing sight of the earth beneath our feet.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "Intense prayer, yes, but it does not distract us from our commitment to history: by opening our heart to the love of God it also opens it to the love of our brothers and sisters, and makes us capable of shaping history according to God's plan" (Saint John Paul II)

- "We have to walk firm in Christ' faith, firm in the truth of the Gospel; but our attitude has to move continuously according to the signs of the times" (Francis)

- "... Every human person, created in the image of God, has the natural right to be recognized as a free and responsible being. All owe to each other this duty of respect. the right to the exercise of freedom, especially in moral and religious matters..." (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 1738)