

Saturday of the Twenty-ninth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 13:1-9): Some people told Jesus about the Galileans whose blood Pilate had mingled with the blood of their sacrifices. He said to them in reply, “Do you think that because these Galileans suffered in this way they were greater sinners than all other Galileans? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did! Or those eighteen people who were killed when the tower at Siloam fell on them— do you think they were more guilty than everyone else who lived in Jerusalem? By no means! But I tell you, if you do not repent, you will all perish as they did!”

And he told them this parable: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none, he said to the gardener, ‘For three years now I have come in search of fruit on this fig tree but have found none. So cut it down. Why should it exhaust the soil?’ He said to him in reply, ‘Sir, leave it for this year also, and I shall cultivate the ground around it and fertilize it; it may bear fruit in the future. If not you can cut it down.’”

“He came in search of fruit on it but found none”

Fr. Antoni ORIOL i Tataret
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Today, Jesus' words invite us to ponder over the inconveniences of hypocrisy: “There once was a person who had a fig tree planted in his orchard, and when he came in search of fruit on it but found none” (Lk 13:6). The hypocrite makes

believe he is what he is not. This lie reaches its apex when one feigns virtue (the moral aspect) but is dissolute and libertine, or feigns devotion (the religious aspect) but only cares about himself and his own interests and not about God. Moral hypocrisy abounds in our world, and religious hypocrisy hurts the Church.

Jesus' invectives against the masters of the Law and the Pharisees —clearer and more direct in other evangelic fragments— are very strong. We cannot read or listen to these words without them reaching the bottom of our hearts, if we have really heard and understood them.

We all have experienced the distance between what we pretend to be and what we actually are. Some politicians are hypocritical when they claim to be serving their country while they are simply using it; security forces can be, when, in the name of public order, they protect crooked and illegal groups; medical personnel could also be when, in the name of medicine, they decide to do away with an incipient life or advance the ending of a terminal patient; the media, when they alter the news or pretend to amuse people by corrupting them; administrators of public money, when they divert part of it to their own party or individual pockets, but openly proclaim their honesty; the laity, when they hinder the public dimension of religion in the name of the freedom of conscience; friars, when they live out their monastic orders, unfaithful to the spirit and demands of their rule; and priests, who live from the altar and do not serve their parishioners with evangelic spirit and abnegation; etc.

Ah! and you and I too, to the extent our conscience may tell us what we are supposed to be doing and we do not do it, and we prefer to see the splinter in the other's eye while we do not even want to realize we have a beam in our own eyes. Is it not so?

—Jesus Christ, Savior of the world, save us from our hypocrisies, whether small or big!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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"You were within me but I was outside myself, and there I sought you! In my weakness, I ran

after the beauty of the things you have made. You were with me, and I was not with you. The things you have made kept me from you – the things which would have no being unless they existed in you!" (Saint Augustine)

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"Authentic faith, open to others and to forgiveness, works miracles. The fig tree represents infertility, a barren life, incapable of giving anything. Jesus curses the fig tree because it made no effort to bear fruit" (Francis)

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"Sin is present in human history; any attempt to ignore it or to give this dark reality other names would be futile. To try to understand what sin is, one must first recognize the profound relation of man to God, for only in this relationship is the evil of sin unmasked in its true identity as humanity's rejection of God and opposition to him, even as it continues to weigh heavy on human life and history" (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 386)