Monday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 13:10-17): Jesus was teaching in a synagogue on the sabbath. And a woman was there who for eighteen years had been crippled by a spirit; she was bent over, completely incapable of standing erect. When Jesus saw her, he called to her and said, “Woman, you are set free of your infirmity.” He laid his hands on her, and she at once stood up straight and glorified God.

But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the sabbath, said to the crowd in reply, “There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the sabbath day.” The Lord said to him in reply, “Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering? This daughter of Abraham, whom Satan has bound for eighteen years now, ought she not to have been set free on the sabbath day from this bondage?” When he said this, all his adversaries were humiliated; and the whole crowd rejoiced at all the splendid deeds done by him.

"But the leader of the synagogue, indignant that Jesus had cured on the Sabbath..."

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Today, we can see how Jesus carries out an action that loudly proclaims his interpretation of messianic fulfillment. And how, in front of it, the ruler of the synagogue becomes outraged and scolds people for coming to be healed on a Saturday: “There are six days when work should be done. Come on those days to be cured, not on the Sabbath day” (Lk 13:14).

I would like to center this commentary upon this character's attitude. I have always been surprised at how, before an evident miracle, there is always someone who is able to close his eyes in such a way that he remains totally unconcerned. Had he not seen what happened or what it means, it would be the same. The reason being, though, that many Jews in those days had a wrong experience of intermediations. For different reasons —anthropological, cultural, divine designs— it is unavoidable that between God and man some intermediations may exist. The problem is that some Jews make intermediation an absolute. But intermediation does not put them in communication with God, so they remain in the intermediation itself. They forget the ultimate meaning and stay in the intent. In this manner God cannot pass on to them

neither His grace, nor His gifts and love, therefore their religious experience will not enrich their lives.

All this led them to live a religious experience, shutting down their god within strict limits. They manufactured a custom-made god, which they did not let into their lives. In their religiosity they believed all was well provided they stayed within certain rules. We can, thus, understand Jesus' reaction: “Hypocrites! Does not each one of you on the Sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger and lead it out for watering?” (Lk 13:15). Jesus uncovers the absurdity of this wrong experience of the Sabbath.

God's words should help us to examine our own religious experience and to find out whether the intermediations we use actually bring us into communication with God and with life. St. Augustine's phrase, “Love and do what you will”, can only be understood as the correct experience of intermediations.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "The true temple of Christ is the soul of the faithful: adorn it and beautify this shrine, place your offerings in it and receive Christ. What is the use of decorating the walls with precious stones if Christ dies of hunger in the person of the poor?" (Saint Jerome)

- “The doctors of the law reproached Jesus because he healed on the Sabbath, he did good on the Sabbath. But the love of Jesus was in giving health, doing good: this always takes priority!” (Francis)

- “Liberation and salvation. By his glorious Cross Christ has won salvation for all men. He redeemed them from the sin that held them in bondage…” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n 1,741)