Friday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 14:1-6): On a sabbath Jesus went to dine at the home of one of the leading Pharisees, and the people there were observing him carefully. In front of him there was a man suffering from dropsy. Jesus spoke to the scholars of the law and Pharisees in reply, asking, “Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath or not?” But they kept silent; so he took the man and, after he had healed him, dismissed him. Then he said to them “Who among you, if your son or ox falls into a cistern, would not immediately pull him out on the sabbath day?” But they were unable to answer his question.

“Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath or not?”

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Today the Gospel shows us Jesus: firm as an ox, gentle as a donkey. He is at the house of an important Pharisee; it is a Sabbath. “They were observing him carefully” (Lk 14:1). In this atmosphere of judgment, Jesus looks at a man suffering from dropsy before him, and his question is direct: “Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath or not?” (Lk 14:3). A question that challenges the rigidity of the law in favor of compassion, also of the heart. The law of the Sabbath, like our Sunday, was intended for rest and sanctification, and it had become a burden. Jesus, by comparing if the “son or the ox falls into a cistern,” shows us the inconsistency of those who, concerned about their possessions, would rescue them without hesitation, while postponing (on the Sabbath) the healing of a person.

One who was rescued from a well is Saul of Tarsus. Let us imagine what he would say in his thanksgiving, echoing the words of Pope Leo XIV: “As we thank the Lord for the calling that changed his life… let us ask the Lord for the grace to cultivate and spread his charity, and to become true neighbors to one another.” Saint Bede interprets the ox and the donkey as “the Jewish and Gentile peoples, called to be freed from the well of concupiscence.” Jesus rescues everyone, regardless of our condition and the day. Being the “Son,” he would remember that night in Bethlehem, with the tender gaze of Mary and Joseph, where an ox and a donkey contemplated him; that child who came to pull us out of the well of sin, all of us and forever. Today, he encourages us with eyes of mercy to contemplate people before things, to prioritize life, every day.

Today's healing, and the words of Jesus, challenge us: do our rules, traditions, or comforts prevent us from seeing the needs of others? The table—a symbol and sacrament of community and Eucharistic life—to which we are all invited, reflects a profound truth: our lives have incalculable value. At this table, Jesus washes our feet and gives himself to us as food, and He commands: "Do this in memory of me"

(Luke 22:19).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Rightly then is the dropsical man healed in the Pharisees’ presence, for by the bodily infirmity of the one, is expressed the mental disease of the other.” (Saint Gregory the Great)

- “The way to be faithful to the law without overlooking justice, without neglecting love is the opposite path: from love to integrity; from love to discernment; from love to the law. This is the path that Jesus teaches us.” (Francis)

- “… Regimes whose nature is contrary to the natural law, to the public order, and to the fundamental rights of persons cannot achieve the common good of the nations on which they have been imposed.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 1901)

Other comments

«But no one answered»

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Today, we will center our attention on the piercing question Jesus asked the Pharisees: “Is it lawful to cure on the sabbath or not?” (Lk 14:4), and in their very significant silence, as per St. Luke: “But they kept silent” (Lk 14:4).

Many are the Gospel episodes where Our Lord reproaches their hypocrisy to the Pharisees. It is quite noteworthy how God's outstanding interest in substantiating up to which point He dislikes this sin —false appearances, deceitful actions—, which is at the antipodes of Christ's praise to Nathaniel: “Here is a true Israelite. There is no duplicity in him” (Jn 1:47). God loves the heart's simplicity, the spirit's naivety. On the other hand, He rejects with energy the intricacies, the shady looks, the double standards, the hypocrisy.

What is significant in the Lord's question and in the Pharisees' silent reply is the bad conscience they had, deep inside. There was a man suffering from dropsy who was looking forward to be healed by Jesus. The fulfillment of the Jewish Law —mere attention to the letter with contempt of the spirit— and the empty presumption of their blameless behavior, brings them to appear shocked by the attitude of Christ who, led by his merciful heart, does not allow any legal formalisms to prevent him from healing he who is ailing.

The Pharisees realize that their hypocrite behavior cannot be justified and this is what keeps them silent. A clear lesson shines through in this passage: the need to understand that saintliness is to follow Christ —until full love— and not to coldly fulfill some legal precepts. The Commandments are holy because they come all the way directly from God's infinite Wisdom, but it is quite possible to live them in a legalistic and empty way, and it is then when the incongruity appears of pretending to follow God and ending up by going after ourselves.

Let the charming simplicity of the Mother of God prevail in our lives.