

Thursday 31st in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 15,1-10): Tax collectors and sinners were seeking the company of Jesus, all of them eager to hear what He had to say. But the Pharisees and the scribes frowned at this, muttering. «This man welcomes sinners and eats with them».

So Jesus told them this parable: «Who among you, having a hundred sheep and losing one of them, will not leave the ninety-nine in the wilderness and seek out the lost one till he finds it? And finding it, will he not joyfully carry it home on his shoulders? Then he will call his friends and neighbors together and say: ‘Celebrate with me for I have found my lost sheep’. I tell you, just so, there will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner than over ninety-nine upright who do not need to repent.

»What woman, if she has ten silver coins and loses one, will not light a lamp and sweep the house in a thorough search till she finds the lost coin? And finding it, she will call her friends and neighbors and say: ‘Celebrate with me for I have found the silver coin I lost!’. I tell you, in the same way there is rejoicing among the angels of God over one repentant sinner».

«There will be more rejoicing in heaven over one repentant sinner»

Fr. Francesc NICOLAU i Pous
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Today, the evangelist of God's mercy imparts two parables of Jesus that lighten up his divine behavior towards those sinners returning to the right path. With the human image of joy, he reveals God's goodness finding pleasure in the homecoming

of those who moved away from sin. It is like coming back to the Father's home (as more distinctly will say at Lk 15:11-32). «For God sent not his Son into the world to condemn the world; but that the world through him might be saved» (Jn 3:17), and He did it while welcoming those that, full of confidence, «were seeking the company of Jesus (...), to hear what He had to say» (Lk 15:1), as He healed their soul as the doctor heals the body of the ailing (cf. Mt 9:12). While the Pharisees believed they were so righteous and felt they needed no doctor, it is actually for them —the evangelist says— that Jesus proposes the parables we read today.

If we feel spiritually sick, Jesus will tend to us and will be happy that we have gone to him. But if, on the contrary, we would think, as those proud Pharisees did, that we need not to plead forgiveness, the divine Doctor will not heal us. Each time we recite the Lord's Prayer, we must feel like sinners, as we say «and forgive us our wrongs...». And we sure must be grateful to him for doing it! As grateful we must also be, for having placed, so mercifully, at our disposal, the Sacrament of Reconciliation. Let us hope our haughtiness will not make us to look down on it. St. Augustine tells us that Jesus Christ, God and Man, gives us an example of humbleness by removing the “tumor” of our arrogance, «for, though great is the misery of a haughty man, greater is still the mercy of the humble God».

Let us further add that the lesson Jesus gives to the Pharisees is also an example for all of us; we cannot throw sinners away from us. The lord wants us to love them as He has loved us (cf. Jn 13:34) and we must rejoice to bring back home the lost sheep or to recover the lost coin.