

Thursday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 17:20-25): Asked by the Pharisees when the Kingdom of God would come, Jesus said in reply, “The coming of the Kingdom of God cannot be observed, and no one will announce, ‘Look, here it is,’ or, ‘There it is.’ For behold, the Kingdom of God is among you.”

Then he said to his disciples, “The days will come when you will long to see one of the days of the Son of Man, but you will not see it. There will be those who will say to you, ‘Look, there he is,’ or ‘Look, here he is.’ Do not go off, do not run in pursuit. For just as lightning flashes and lights up the sky from one side to the other, so will the Son of Man be in his day. But first he must suffer greatly and be rejected by this generation.”

"The kingdom of God is among you"

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Today, the Pharisees ask Jesus, with a mixture of interest, curiosity, fear... something that has always been of interest for all of us: when will the Kingdom of God come? When will it be the last day, the end of the world, Christ's return to judge the living and the dead in the day of the Last Judgment?

Jesus tells them that this is unpredictable. We only know that it will suddenly come, without notice: it will be “as lightning” (Lk 17:24), a sudden occurrence, full of light and glory, at the same time. As for other circumstances, Jesus' Second Advent remains a complete mystery. But Jesus gives us a true and certain clue: as of now, “the kingdom of God is among you” (Lk 17:21). Or: “inside you”.

The great event of the last day will be a universal accomplishment, but it also happens in the little microcosm of each one's heart. It is there where we must actually seek the Kingdom. Heaven can be found deep inside us, where we must also find Jesus.

This Kingdom that unpredictably will start “outside” may commence right now “inside” us. The last day starts its configuration right now, inside us. If we want to be allowed into the Kingdom on that last day, we must let the Kingdom get inside us, right now. If we want Jesus to be our merciful judge in that particular moment, we better make Him right now our best friend and our inside guest.

St. Bernard, in a sermon for Advent, speaks of the three advents of Christ. The first advent which we now commemorate as Christmas; the third advent, is the Parousia, the advent in which Christ will come to judge the living and the dead, and to take us to Himself. Then St. Bernard explains the second or middle advent as the “time of visitation” by which Christ is now present and active in each of our lives. It is there, where the first and the third advents appear on a personal and experienced level. Jesus' verdict on Judgment's day must already be resounding now in our heart. That, which has yet to arrive, is already now a reality.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“When the day was already declining towards its sunset, the Lord delivered, on the cross, the soul that he would later recover, because he did not lose it against his will. We were also represented there!” (San Agustin)

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“Even suffering, the daily cross of life —the cross of work, of the family, of carrying out things well— this small daily cross is part of the Kingdom of God” (Francis)

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"In the Eucharist... as distinct from the prayers of the old covenant, rely on the mystery of salvation already accomplished, once for all, in Christ crucified and risen." (Catechism of the Church Catholic, no. 2,771)