Friday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 17:26-37): Jesus said to his disciples: “As it was in the days of Noah, so it will be in the days of the Son of Man; they were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage up to the day that Noah entered the ark, and the flood came and destroyed them all. Similarly, as it was in the days of Lot: they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building; on the day when Lot left Sodom, fire and brimstone rained from the sky to destroy them all. So it will be on the day the Son of Man is revealed.

On that day, someone who is on the housetop and whose belongings are in the house must not go down to get them, and likewise one in the field must not return to what was left behind. Remember the wife of Lot. Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it. I tell you, on that night there will be two people in one bed; one will be taken, the other left. And there will be two women grinding meal together; one will be taken, the other left.” They said to him in reply, “Where, Lord?” He said to them, “Where the body is, there also the vultures will gather.”

“They were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building”

Fr. Austin NORRIS
(Mumbai, India)

Today, in the Gospel text, the end times as well as the uncertainty of life is highlighted, not to frighten us, but to keep us fore-armed and focused, ready to meet our Creator. The sacrificial nature of the Gospel is seen in its Lord and Savior Jesus Christ as He leads us by example, to be ever ready to seek and do the Will of God. Constant vigilance and preparedness is the hallmark of the ardent disciple. We cannot just be like people who “were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building” (Lk 17:28). We disciples must be ready and watchful, lest we be lulled into spiritual lethargy by the progress of life from one generation to the next and assume that Jesus won't return after all.

Secularism has taken strong roots in our society. The onslaught of innovation and ready availability of personal goods and services makes us feel self-sufficient and devoid of God’s presence in our lives. It is only when tragedy strikes that we are awakened from our slumber to look at God amidst our “vale of tears…” And we must be thankful for these tragic moments, because they surely must serve to strengthen our faith.

In the recent months, the attacks on Christians in several parts of the world (including my very own country India), may have shaken our faith. But the Holy Father Francis says: “Christians are ultimately hopeful, however, because at the end, Jesus makes a promise that is a guarantee of victory: ‘Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it’ (Lk 17:33).” This is a truth that we can rely on… The powerful witness of our brothers and sisters who lay down their lives for the faith and the witness to Christ shall not be in vain.

And so we labor onwards in the journey of our lives in the sincere hope of meeting our God “in the days of the Son of Man” (Lk 17:30).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "More than sin itself, what irritates and offends God is that sinners do not feel any pain for their sins" (St. John Chrysostom)

- “The claim that humanity can and must do what no God actually does or is able to do is both presumptuous and intrinsically false. It is no accident that this idea has led to the greatest forms of cruelty and violations of justice” (Benedict XVI)

- “… Charity is the greatest social commandment. It respects others and their rights. It requires the practice of justice, and it alone makes us capable of it. Charity inspires a life of self-giving: ‘Whoever seeks to gain his life will lose it, but whoever loses his life will preserve it’ (Lk 17:33).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 1,889)

Other comments

“Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it”

Fr. Enric PRAT i Jordana
(Sort, Lleida, Spain)

Today, in the context of a prevailing materialist culture, many people behave as they did in Noah's time: “They were eating and drinking, marrying and giving in marriage” (Lk 17:28); or as in the days of Lot, when “… they were eating, drinking, buying, selling, planting, building” (Lk 17:28). With such shortsighted vision, the supreme aspiration of many persons is centered in their own physical and temporal life and, consequently, all their efforts are reduced to maintain that kind of life, to protect and enrich it.

In the fragment of the Gospel we are commenting today, Jesus wants to step in this fragmentary conception of life that damages the human being and leads it to frustration. And He does it with a

conclusive and strong sentence, which may move consciences and force them to come up with some fundamental questions: “Whoever seeks to preserve his life will lose it, but whoever loses it will save it” (Lk 17:33). Pondering over this lesson of Jesus Christ, Saint Augustine says: “What are we therefore to say? Will those who do these things all die, that is, those who get married, plant vineyards and build? Not them, but those who boast of all that, those who place all these things before God, those who are willing to offend God for all these things this very moment.”

In fact, who is losing his life while trying to preserve it, but he who has exclusively lived in the flesh, without letting the spirit drift, or who, with a closed mind, selfishly and totally ignore others? For it is obvious that the life of the flesh will eventually be lost, but our spiritual life, if not shared, is also impaired.

Life, per se, tends naturally to growth, exuberance, fructification and reproduction. But, if nobbled and hidden to be ambitiously used with exclusion, it becomes sterile and dies. This is why all the saints, that have taken Jesus, who passionately lived for God and men, as a model, have, in many ways and generously, submitted their lives to the service of God and their fellow men.