Saturday of the Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 21:34-36): Jesus said to his disciples: “Beware that your hearts do not become drowsy from carousing and drunkenness and the anxieties of daily life, and that day catch you by surprise like a trap. For that day will assault everyone who lives on the face of the earth. Be vigilant at all times and pray that you have the strength to escape the tribulations that are imminent and to stand before the Son of Man.”

“Be vigilant at all times and pray”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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Today, the last day of Ordinary Time, Jesus warns us with crystal clarity about the fate of our passage through this life. If we stubbornly persist in living absorbed by the immediacy of life's anxieties, the last day of our earthly existence will arrive so suddenly that the very blindness of our gluttony will prevent us from recognizing God himself, who will come (because we are just passing through here, did you know that?) to take us into the intimacy of his infinite Love. It will be somewhat like what happens to a spoiled child: he is so entertained by "his" toys that he ends up forgetting his parents’ love and the company of his friends. When he realizes this, he cries inconsolably at his unexpected loneliness.

The antidote that Jesus offers us is equally clear: "Be vigilant at all times and pray" (Lk 21:36). Watch and pray... The same warning he gave his Apostles the night he was betrayed. Prayer has an admirable prophetic component, often forgotten in preaching; that is, moving from merely “seeing” to truly “looking” at everyday life in its deepest reality. As Evagrius Ponticus wrote, “Just as sight is the most worthy of the senses, so also is prayer the most divine of the virtues.” The classics of spirituality call it “supernatural vision,” seeing with the eyes of God. Or, in other words, knowing the Truth: about God, about the world, about myself. The prophets were not only those who “predicted what was to come,” but also those who knew how to interpret the present in its proper measure, scope, and depth. The result: they were able to redirect history, with the help of God.

So often we lament the state of the world. “Where will we end up?” we ask. Today is the last day of Ordinary Time; it is also a day for resolutions. Perhaps it's time someone else is willing to rise from their present complacency and get to work on a better future. Do you want to be that someone? Well, take courage! And may God bless you.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Dear brothers, we must endure and persevere if we are to attain the truth and freedom we have been allowed to hope for” (Saint Cyprian)

- “Nostalgia for slavery is nestled in our heart, because it is seemingly more reassuring than freedom, which is far more risky. How we like being captivated by lots of fireworks, beautiful at first glance but which in reality last but a few seconds.” (Francis)

- “(...) The Letter to the Galatians contrasts the works of the flesh with the fruit of the Spirit: ‘Now the works of the flesh are plain: fornication, impurity, licentiousness, idolatry ... drunkenness, carousing, and the like. I warn you, as I warned you before, that those who do such things shall not inherit the Kingdom of God.’ (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 1,852)