Thursday of the First Week of Advent

Gospel text (*Mt* 7:21.24-27): Jesus said to his disciples, “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven”.

“Everyone who listens to these words of mine and acts on them will be like a wise man who built his house on rock. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. But it did not collapse; it had been set solidly on rock. And everyone who listens to these words of mine but does not act on them will be like a fool who built his house on sand. The rain fell, the floods came, and the winds blew and buffeted the house. And it collapsed and was completely ruined.”

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven.”

Fr. Jean-Charles TISSOT
(Freiburg, Switzerland)

Today, the Lord pronounced these words at the end of His "Sermon on the Mount" where He bestows a new and deeper meaning to the Commandments of the Old Testament, the "words" of God to men. He talks as the Son of God, and as such, He demands us “to receive what I say to you”, as very significant words. Thus, these are words of eternal life which we must put into practice; they are not given to us just to be heard without any personal involvement —only to forget them later, or just to admire the speaker.

“To build a house on sand” (cf. Mt 7:26) is an image used to describe a foolish behavior that leads us nowhere and ends up in failure after a long and painful effort to build something. “Bene curris, sed extra viam", said St. Augustine, which we could translate as: “You run well, but you are off the path”. What a shame to end up like that, at the time of trial, of the storms and floods that inevitably fill up our life!

On the other hand, the Lord wants to teach us how to set up a solid groundwork, the base of which originates in our effort to act according to His teachings, living them every day with small decisions that we will try to follow. Thus, our daily resolutions to live by Christ’s teachings must end up in tangible results which, despite not being definitive, can still bring joy and gratitude when we examine our conscience at the end of the day. The joy of having achieved a small victory over ourselves is a preparation for other battles, and the strength will not fail us - with the grace of God — to persevere until the end.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Watch, for when a heavy torpor of weakness and sadness rules over the soul, it is the enemy who holds sway over it and leads it against its own desire. That is why our Lord spoke of vigilance of soul and of body.” (St. Ephrem)

- “Today's Gospel (Mt 7:21;24-27) comes down to a mathematical equation: I know the word, I put it into practice, I am established on rock. How I put it into practice? It is like building a house upon rock. And this figure of the rock refers to the Lord.” (Pope Francis)

- “The prayer of faith consists not only in saying ‘Lord, Lord, ’ but in disposing the heart to do the will of the Father (Mt 7:21). Jesus calls his disciples to bring into their prayer this concern for cooperating with the divine plan. (Cf. Mt 9:38).” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church Nº 2611)

Other comments

“Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven.”

Fr. Antoni ORIOL i Tataret
(Vic, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel invites us to meditate very seriously on the infinite distance that there is between the mere “listen-invoke” and the “do” when it comes to the message and the person of Jesus. And we say “mere” because we cannot forget that there are ways of listening and invoking that do not lead to the “doing”. Indeed, all those who, having listened to the Gospel, believe, will not remain confused; and all those who, believing, invoke the name of the Lord, will be saved: Paul preaches in his letter to the Romans (see: 10:9-13). He is referring to those who believe with authentic faith, that which “works through charity”.

It is a fact, however, that many believe and do not “do”. Saint James' letter exposes it in an impressive way: “Be doers of the word and not hearers only, deluding yourselves” (1:22); “So also faith of itself, if it does not have works, is dead” (2:17); “For just as a body without a spirit is dead, so also faith without works is dead" (2:26). Saint Matthew rejects such a way of going about one's faith, in an unforgettable way, when he says: “Not everyone who says to me, ‘Lord, Lord,’ will enter the kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven” (7:21).

It is therefore necessary to listen and to do; in this way we build on rock and not on sand. How do I put what I listen to into action? Let's ask ourselves a few questions: —Do God and my fellow man really get

my consideration? —Am I a convinced believer?; As to money —Do I share my goods out of solidarity with others?; As to culture —Do I contribute to the invigoration of human values in my country? ; As to the growth of good —Do I run away from the sin of omission?; As to apostolate —Do I look for the eternal salvation of those around me? In a word: —Am I a sensible person who, with works, builds the house of my life on Christ's rock?