March 7th: Memorial of Saints Perpetua and Felicity, martyrs

Gospel text (*Mt* 10:34-39): Jesus said to his disciples, “Do not think that I have come to bring peace upon the earth. I have come to bring not peace but the sword. For I have come to set a man ‘against his father, a daughter against her mother, and a daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law; and one’s enemies will be those of his household.’ “Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

“Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it”

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Today, the disparity of the facts slaps our consciences. Perpetua and Felicity were two women -young nursing mothers- of the 2nd century who suffered martyrdom the year 203. And, behold, these are the wonders of Christianity: for the love of Christ they died as sisters when, actually, Felicity was Perpetua’s slave. The two of them --holding onto each other - endured the same torment in the same way. Before the Lord, there is no difference between "Jew" and "Greek": we are all Christ's, and Christ is God’s (cf. 1 Cor 3:22-23).

Another contrast that strikes us: the Christian brothers treated with Felicity and Perpetua a delicate, caring, loving treatment - almost worship - during their last hours, while authorities and pagans behaved in the rudest and most outrageous manner. It is surprising, the extent viciousness can attain in humans when – released from the Creator – they can even enjoy tearing apart the martyr’s body... Away from the Logos - eternal Love and Reason - man may reach a level of irrationality unknown even among like-minded irrational savages.

This is, therefore, the drama of the “insulated consciousness. Insulated, from what? Isolated from the revelation of God” (Pope Francis). Jesus Christ does not want "war", but - in the words of old Simeon – He was to be a "sign that will be contradicted" (Lk 2:34). Whoever is not with Him is against Him and his followers (cf. Lk 11:23). The Love of God and Jesus Christ’ Cross do not leave anyone uncaring...

Paradoxically, the names of these Saints -"Felicity" and "Perpetua" - seem to contrast with the acceptance

of the Cross and denial of "secular goods". Yes, they surrendered to the Cross of the Lord and gave up a transitory future, with a view to "perpetual felicity", the only one that really matters. The words of today's Gospel become reality: “Whoever loses his life for my sake will find it” (Mt 10:39).

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Moved with sincere love, certain hope and genuine faith, these two women ascend, trampling the head of the serpent in different ways despite their hissing.” (Saint Augustine)
- “Do not be afraid to risk your lives by making space for Jesus Christ. This is the way to find inner peace and true happiness.” (Benedict XVI)
- “The faithful should bear witness to the Lord's name by confessing the faith without giving way to fear. Preaching and catechizing should be permeated with adoration and respect for the name of our Lord Jesus Christ.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 2145)