November 18th: Memorial of Saint Odo, Abbot of Cluny

Gospel text (*Lk* 12:35-40): Jesus said to his disciples: “Gird your loins and light your lamps and be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding, ready to open immediately when he comes and knocks. Blessed are those servants whom the master finds vigilant on his arrival. Amen, I say to you, he will gird himself, have them recline at table, and proceed to wait on them. And should he come in the second or third watch and find them prepared in this way, blessed are those servants.

Be sure of this: if the master of the house had known the hour when the thief was coming, he would not have let his house be broken into. You also must be prepared, for at an hour you do not expect, the Son of Man will come.”

“Be like servants who await their master’s return from a wedding”

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Today we are challenged by Jesus’ warning: “Let your loins be girded and your lamps burning” (Lk 12:35). This exhortation to vigilance runs throughout the entire Gospel: it is not about living in anxious tension, but in loving readiness. Saint Odo of Cluny (c. 878/879–942), abbot and reformer, understood this word as a plan for life: to be girded is to set one’s heart in order; to keep the lamp burning is to allow prayer to nourish the inner light.

For Odo, vigilance is born of desire. It is not fear of punishment that keeps the faithful servant awake, but the joy of awaiting the Lord’s return. In Cluniac life, the liturgy—celebrated with care and perseverance—was a school of this expectation: each psalm, each night vigil, tuned the ear to recognize the footsteps of the “Bridegroom.” For this reason, Odo urged his monks not to fall asleep in routine, reminding them that the present time is fragile and that it is a beautiful thing to dedicate it to God.

Jesus adds a surprising promise: the Lord who returns will gird himself and serve his servants. Here Odo’s spirituality shines: the abbot did not place himself above others, but among them, like a father who serves. For him, reform was not about imposing burdens, but about rekindling charity. In this way

vigilance becomes concrete: caring for common life, supporting the weak, persevering when it seems that “the master is delayed.”

The Gospel also warns against false security. We do not know the hour! Odo, aware of the human and social instability of his time, insisted on living each day as an offering. Not a flight from the world, but a way of dwelling in it with one’s heart anchored in God. The burning lamp is a unified life, without duplicity.

In the words of Pope Leo XIV, “Christian vigilance is not anxiety about tomorrow, but fidelity today; it is keeping the oil of hope so that faith may not be extinguished.” In the light of Saint Odo, the Gospel invites us to a vigilance that sings, prays, and serves.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- «It is not the place that sanctifies the person, but the person who sanctifies the place through faith» (Saint Odo of Cluny)

- «Saint Odo of Cluny was a true spiritual guide both for the monks and for the faithful of his time. Faced with the ‘great number of vices’ spread throughout society, the remedy he resolutely proposed was a radical change of life, founded on humility, austerity, detachment from ephemeral things and adherence to those that are eternal» (Benedict XVI)

- «(...) Vigilance of the heart is insisted upon repeatedly (...). Vigilance is ‘guarding the heart’, and Jesus asks the Father to ‘keep us in his name’ (Jn 17:11). The Holy Spirit continually seeks to awaken us to this vigilance. This petition takes on its full dramatic meaning when it refers to the final temptation of our earthly struggle; it asks for final perseverance (...)» (Catechism of the Catholic Church, nº 2.849)