

04. October 2019

“To proclaim the whole gospel”

St. Francis

Lk 10, 13-16

'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago, sitting in sackcloth and ashes. And still, it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon at the Judgement than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be raised high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell. Anyone who listens to you listens to me; anyone who rejects you rejects me, and those who reject me reject the one who sent me.'

We must face the whole Gospel message, though the words may seem harsh at first. It is important to counteract a tendency that is unfortunately widespread today, that with a relativizing view those challenging passages of the Gospel are leveled in such a way that they correspond to our contemporary taste and attitude to life. In this context, there is a danger of misusing the concept of mercy and of developing erroneous pastoral conceptions.

As true as it is that the mercy of God saves the world, it would be wrong to ignore God's righteousness.

Today's gospel text clearly reminds us of the responsibility to which the gospel calls us. The cities in which the Lord has been are no longer the same after his coming. They have a different responsibility because the gospel had arrived and was affirmed by signs and wonders.

The proclamation of the Gospel, and this should be self-evident, should not be accompanied by physical or psychic violence. But it has been brought in his full consequence to man.

It is right to place the saving message of mercy in the forefront of proclamation and to proclaim to man the paternal love of God revealed in his Son. However we cannot avoid to speak about the consequences of not

accepting the proclamation, and of remaining in a state of sin for time and eternity.

St. Francis, whose memory we celebrate today, was aware of this situation. In one of his traditional words it is said, *"Blessed be you, O Lord, my God, for the sake of our brother, the bodily death that no man who lives can escape, woe to those who die in mortal sin, blessed are those who fulfill the most holy will of God, for the other death will not come over them. "*

Till today, the radicalism of St. Francis and his succession of the Crucified is a strong testimony, however often misunderstood and a little romanticized. His praise of creation is an outpouring of his great love of God as our creator and father and extended to the whole creature and not any kind of pantheistic thinking and feeling.

Francis was an elected one of the Lord, also showed up in receiving the stigmata, someone who was overwhelmed by the love of Christ and gave an extremely radical answer. Nothing should be his own, everything he wanted to hand over to Christ and live in great poverty. This poverty also means to depend entirely on the Lord, to receive everything from his hand, not to live from one's own strength and organization. In the spirit of poverty, he also turned to the poor in whom he wanted to serve Christ.

We will not understand St. Francis without this overwhelming love for God. This love burned so strong that everything seemed to him too little, what he could give to God. All his radical actions should serve in depth to make the presence and goodness of God all the more visible in his life, to give God the glory and to put himself in the background.

It had been the followers of St. Francis, who over many centuries proclaimed the gospel with conviction to bring people to salvation in Christ.

May they never give up or relativize this mission and notice the dangers of a dialogue that no longer has the purpose to convince others of the truth of the gospel. May they never give up also to proclaim the righteousness of God, without true mercy can not really be understood. May they not turn their first attention to ecological and political questions, and even to support romantic and neo-pagan errors to enter into the church. St. Francis burned for God and the gospel. May his disciples be always enflamed with the grace of God.