

23. January 2020

“God wants to heal and liberate”

Mk 3,7-12

Jesus withdrew with his disciples to the lakeside, and great crowds from Galilee followed him. From Judaea, and from Jerusalem, and from Idumaea and Transjordan and the region of Tyre and Sidon, great numbers who had heard of all he was doing came to him. And he asked his disciples to have a boat ready for him because of the crowd, to keep him from being crushed. For he had cured so many that all who were afflicted in any way were crowding forward to touch him. And the unclean spirits, whenever they saw him, would fall down before him and shout, 'You are the Son of God!' But he warned them strongly not to make him known.

The crowds came to Jesus to be healed by Him, for *a force came out of Him*, as other parts of the New Testament testify (*cf. Lk 6,19*). There were so many people coming, that Jesus has to take physical distance by getting into a boat.

We can imagine what those people were experiencing: suddenly, hope was rising within them. And, indeed, healings were taking place, as we read in this biblical passage: *"he cured so many..."*. There is another verse where it even says that Jesus healed all those who came to him (*cf. Mt 8,16*). For his fame had been spread and so they came from everywhere.

This passage reveals us how much man is worth to God. Not only does He pity people who are like sheep without a shepherd; He also has compassion with bodily suffering and wants to remedy it. The message is clear, God has mercy on the whole situation of man, both his physical and his spiritual suffering. The only thing he expects from man is his faith: he wants us to approach him in trust and to place our hope in him, clinging to him alone: "Only you, Lord, can help me!"

This was the case when the Son of God was on earth, but this mercy of God is still effective today! God never overlooks the suffering of man. Rather, he integrates it into his plan of salvation, even though this may be difficult for us to understand! However, God does not always heal directly the suffering, even though this happens sometimes! What we can be certain of is that He will always assist and strengthen from within the suffering person who calls upon Him!

For many, the question of suffering in the world is a real problem, or it is a frequent question asked of God. For some it is even a reason to doubt the existence of God. Indeed: who likes to suffer? Suffering seems nonsensical, as if against our human nature! And indeed, it is a sign of death that is coming upon us!

Death itself is also difficult to understand; yet we cannot escape it. In faith we are even called to approach it in a conscious way. Faith teaches us that, although death is an enemy, it is also the last step to be able to encounter God in his glory.

Suffering reminds us of our mortality and fragility; it reminds us that we will not be on earth forever and that God has something much greater in store for us.

Like the people of this biblical passage, we can approach Jesus with confidence, hoping for his help. We can be sure that help will come, either as relief from suffering; or in the strength to be able to bear it, learning to integrate it into our lives and accepting it as a teacher that reminds us of our earthly limitations.

If we learn to deal with suffering in the right way, it can make us more humble, perhaps also more sensitive to the pain of the other person.

But suffering can also make us bitter, if we close ourselves up in it, surrendering ourselves to accusations against God, against circumstances, and perhaps also against other people! This should not happen! In the encounter with Jesus, suffering should be touched by Him and thus be transformed. As much as it is justified to turn to Jesus with the greatest trust, even to ask him instantly for healing, it is important as a believer to consciously leave everything in the hands of the Lord, so that He can dispose of this suffering!

There is one more event in today's text to which we must pay attention. It refers not only to sick people who come to Jesus, but also to possessed people who throw themselves at his feet crying out: *"You are the Son of God"*!

Possessed people are those who are under a concrete influence of demons, to the point that the evil spirit can even dwell in them! To this day this reality continues to exist, especially where practices of magic or occultism are frequent. Many passages in the New Testament tell us that Jesus expelled evil spirits.

In today's text we read that Jesus did not want the demons to testify to who he is. Why does he not want that, if in this case what they say corresponds to the truth and they even throw themselves at his feet?

Jesus is the Son of God and we should worship Him, we too can and should fall down before Him! We could think that it does not matter who is the one who bears witness to Jesus, as long as he is announced.

But the evil spirits fear Jesus; they have to confess God, because he meets them in omnipotence as judge. They do not love Jesus! Their falling down before him is not an act of love and humility, but they have to do it because of the omnipotence of God!

But Jesus wants to be witnessed differently! It is the testimony of the Holy Spirit who reveals to us the true image of God, just as Jesus reveals to us the goodness of the Father! The Lord wants to be witnessed in love and not primarily in fear, and especially not in the way of demons!

That is why it is important for us believers not to concern ourselves too much with the activities and witnesses of the devil. He does not give us the true image of God, even if he seems to be telling the truth! Let us not be fascinated by the darkness ...

Instead, let us turn to the Lord with confidence: "You, Lord, take care of my infirmities! I will proclaim your goodness and your mercy."