

15. December 2020

Come, Lord Jesus Maranatha! - Part 3
“Love awakens!”

We spoke in the last meditation about watchfulness as a basic attitude of the believer who waits for the Lord's return: a watchfulness that awakens us from the general spiritual sleepiness and makes us attentive to his approaching coming and also to what precedes the return of Christ.

How does this sleepiness come about and what can we do to overcome it? How can our lives be completely focused on the coming Lord and we do not lose this alertness even if the Lord does not come for a long time?

In Matthew 25, the Lord points out two elements that promote our watchfulness. First, there is the parable of the ten virgins waiting for the bridegroom (*Mt 25:1-13*). But only five of them are really prepared for his coming in such a way that they can endure a long wait. When he comes, they have enough oil for their lamps to go out to meet him, while the other virgins have no more supply of oil.

What does the oil consist of? It is good to continue reading the text that follows the description of the virgins. It speaks of the good works we are to do and the use of the gifts God has entrusted to us for his kingdom.

With good works we gather treasures in heaven (*cf. Mt 6:20*) and also win the gratitude and friendship of people. The more we are moved to do good, the more our heart awakens in love. That is what a bride is all about. Her love for the bridegroom keeps her awake and gathers so much oil that she is ready for him in the decisive hour.

The active love spoken of here grows like all true love. It makes us more zealous, because the good we do, which comes from the “Good” (*cf. Mk 10:18*), shapes our soul so that doing good becomes a matter of course. It is the other way round when we miss the opportunities given to us to practise charity. The more this happens, the more sluggish we become, the more difficult it is for us to do good, love does not grow but becomes less or can even start to get cold.

The Lord opens another perspective for us in the text. Active charity is a service to Jesus himself, joining with the poor and needy: “*In truth I tell you, in so far as you did this to one of the least of these brothers of mine, you did it to me.*” (*Mt 25:40*)

The growth in love is also what is at stake in using the talents entrusted to us for the Kingdom of God. Love is inventive. It will always discover new ways to serve the Lord and people and it is this unfolding of love that multiplies it, as is also expressed in the text:

“The man who had received the five talents came forward bringing five more. “Sir,” he said, “you entrusted me with five talents; here are five more that I have made.” His master said to him, “Well done, good and trustworthy servant; you have shown you are trustworthy in small things; I will trust you with greater; come and join in your master's happiness.”” and “For to everyone who has will be given more, and he will have more than enough” (Mt 25: 20-21.29a).

Now if we continue to research how to keep enough oil for our lamps, we will come across the same thing. It is always a matter of our growing in love; be it in receiving the Lord's divine love in contemplation, be it in the concrete application of love in the various tasks entrusted to us in our earthly life. Love must not grow cold! It is our principle of life. *“At the evening of life, we shall be judged on our love”* says St. John of the Cross. And St. Augustine calls to us: *“Love and do what you will”*.

Love, whose praise is so sung by St Paul (*1 Cor 13*), is the highest gift. It is nourished by receiving and doing. It is the motivation why God created, redeems and perfects us. Therefore, we should always look for it: What does love tell us, what should we do, what does it want from us? It should exercise its mild reign as queen in us. Of course, it must be true love. Only according to true Love can the beautiful words of St. Augustine apply. *“Love and do what you will.”*

The love that is poured into our hearts is the Holy Spirit (*cf. Rom 5,5*), the love between the Father and the Son. So we can say that the more we follow the voice of the Holy Spirit, the more he takes the lead in our lives, the more oil we have. In this way, love grows in us and so we are prepared to approach the coming of the Lord with vigilance.