

24. February 2021

**“How do we treat the goods entrusted to us?”**

*Lk 11:29-32*

*The crowds got even bigger and he addressed them, 'This is an evil generation; it is asking for a sign. The only sign it will be given is the sign of Jonah. For just as Jonah became a sign to the people of Nineveh, so will the Son of man be a sign to this generation. On Judgement Day the Queen of the South will stand up against the people of this generation and be their condemnation, because she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon; and, look, there is something greater than Solomon here. On Judgement Day the men of Nineveh will appear against this generation and be its condemnation, because when Jonah preached they repented; and, look, there is something greater than Jonah here.*

The Lord has already given enough signs for us to recognise His existence and His love for His people. When Jesus, the Word made flesh, came into the world, the presence of God became an even stronger and more tangible reality for people.

But whoever closes his heart and refuses to read the signs will not be helped by even the most powerful signs of God's presence. Even if initially strongly impressed, this first impact would fade and move into the background, while the hardness of the heart would become dominant.

Jesus is confronted with this reality, and speaks about it clearly, pointing to his generation as an “*evil generation*”.

It is important that we see this dimension of man as a real possibility, which can affect us all. If Scripture makes us see something that makes us uncomfortable, and if we discover the shadows in our hearts, we cannot simply relativise and justify it immediately. If we do so, we do not allow that impact and shock to come upon us that becomes healing. Of course, we will also perceive these shadows in other people; but if we face ourselves realistically, we will be careful not to look critically only at others, while being blind to what is within ourselves.

If we take the lesson given to us in this gospel passage, and put it into practice, then we will have to seriously evaluate ourselves as Catholics, questioning how we are making the most of the riches that the Church grants us. The measure to

examine ourselves will be those people who do not have the joy of being served at this richly set table, and see how they make the most of the little they have received. These people are like a mirror held up before us. Through it, we can get a glimpse of what might have happened if we had responded fully to the grace that has been given to us.

The coming of the Lord calls man to conversion, and to live in the fullness of God. Cardinal Burke, a distinguished canonist, acknowledged in an interview that in his youth he did not yet appreciate the immense grace of belonging to the Catholic Church. This is how he describes it: *“We had all this richness in our Catholic life; a richness that was given to us in superabundance. It was just there. We didn't have to strive to have it, and it seems to me that we took it for granted and didn't appreciate it enough. The youth of today are hungry for this richness that we, when we were young, knew, but did not preserve.”*

In the beauty and fullness of the Catholic faith we have not only been served a richly set table, to comfort and strengthen ourselves; but we have also been entrusted with the mission to bring out this richness for others. Lest we have to stand before the Lord one day and confess to Him that we did not take this abundance for ourselves, nor did we offer it to others.

How many treasures have been entrusted to us in the Catholic Church! Sound doctrine, mysticism, the sacraments, the various ways of following Christ, the witness of the saints... just to mention a few elements of this richness. With eagle's wings we should hasten to proclaim the Gospel in the power of the Holy Spirit!

Like Cardinal Burke, we should question whether we take all this richness too naturally. Or, being even more critical, let us ask ourselves whether we preserve the richness of the Church; or whether, on the contrary, we neglect it. This last question must not only be asked personally, but as a Church.

- Are we preserving the treasure of the holy liturgy, or are we neglecting it?
- Are we preserving the holy doctrine and all the praxis that results from it, or are we relativising it?
- Are we corresponding to the task of evangelisation, or are we losing more and more of that dynamism?
- Are we preserving the holiness of the Church, or are we progressively mundanising it?
- Are we giving orientation to the world in moral questions, or are we adapting our mentality to that of the world?

The Lord will ask us these questions!