

26. August 2021

“The Vigilant Attitude”

Mt 24:42-51

'So stay awake, because you do not know the day when your master is coming. You may be quite sure of this, that if the householder had known at what time of the night the burglar would come, he would have stayed awake and would not have allowed anyone to break through the wall of his house. Therefore, you too must stand ready because the Son of man is coming at an hour you do not expect. 'Who, then, is the wise and trustworthy servant whom the master placed over his household to give them their food at the proper time? Blessed that servant if his master's arrival finds him doing exactly that. In truth I tell you, he will put him in charge of everything he owns. But if the servant is dishonest and says to himself, "My master is taking his time," and sets about beating his fellow-servants and eating and drinking with drunkards, his master will come on a day he does not expect and at an hour he does not know. The master will cut him off and send him to the same fate as the hypocrites, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth'

Vigilance is a key concept for the spiritual life in the following of Christ. This vigilance is not limited to certain stages of our life, which could be particularly dangerous; rather it should be the constant attitude that permeates the Christian's life. This does not mean that we have to live in a tension that always fears that we might be doing something wrong, and that can end in scruples. Rather, it is about the soul being attentive to the presence of its Lord. Of course this includes vigilance against the enemy of humankind, who wants to take advantage of our weaknesses and inclinations.

In today's Gospel, the Lord gives us a clear instruction on how to practice vigilance: “stay awake”. This disposition that is asked of us, means to be totally focused on God and in expectation of the Lord's return. How would we want Him to meet us if He were to return on this very day? This same attitude can also be applied to our death. How would we want to face it? Certainly we would all answer that we would want it to meet us in a state of grace! Therefore, vigilance is required in all that we do. Are we attentive to the Lord's Will and do we seek to obey him finely in small, everyday things, and not just in broad strokes and on a general level? Do we allow ourselves to be easily distracted? Do we neglect prayer and interior conversion? Do we occupy ourselves too much with the things of this world? Do we handle the modern media

correctly or do we allow ourselves to be dominated by them? It is always helpful to examine our conscience, so that we do not fall asleep spiritually.

Our external activities and chores should also be carried out with our focus on God. He commissions us to cooperate in His work of bringing men back to the Father's House. In other words, God wants us to fulfill the mission that has been entrusted to us as Christians and, more specifically, the task that corresponds to each one of us personally. The Lord wants to see us working in this mission, and praises the servant who, on his return, finds it so.

As far as the interior dimension is concerned, we must watch over our own hearts and thoughts. Prayer, the reception of the sacraments and the Word of God strengthen man in his inner self; and asceticism, for its part, helps us not to give in too much to our inclinations and to tighten our spiritual life.

As regards the external dimension, that is, evangelization and works of charity, we must keep in mind our responsibility to this world and to our neighbor. These two dimensions, the interior and the exterior, are like two currents of love, which act together and increase our vigilance, especially when we keep the Lord present in all that we do.

In this way, vigilance helps us to avoid two dangers. On the one hand, prayer and religious practices cannot be seen as ends in themselves; they must be at the service of evangelization. On the other hand, external activities must be sustained by the interior journey, so that they may be permeated by the "taste of love".

Let us ask the Lord for vigilance; that loving attention focused on Him, which frees us from laziness and prepares us to meet Him.