



31. August 2021

“Sobriety and vigilance”

1 Tess 5:1-6.9-11

*'About times and dates, brothers, there is no need to write to you for you are well aware in any case that the Day of the Lord is going to come like a thief in the night. It is when people are saying, 'How quiet and peaceful it is' that sudden destruction falls on them, as suddenly as labour pains come on a pregnant woman; and there is no escape. But you, brothers, do not live in the dark, that the Day should take you unawares like a thief. No, you are all children of light and children of the day: we do not belong to the night or to darkness, so we should not go on sleeping, as everyone else does, but stay wide awake and sober. God destined us not for his retribution, but to win salvation through our Lord Jesus Christ, who died for us so that, awake or asleep, we should still live united to him. So give encouragement to each other, and keep strengthening one another, as you do already.'*

The theme of the Second Coming of Christ and our readiness to go forth to meet Him should accompany us throughout our lives. It would be of much benefit if we had a healthy teaching regarding the Return of the Lord, which, on the one hand, would maintain our vigilance and encourage it; and, on the other hand, would not lead us to useless speculations, which unfortunately are usually created around this subject.

The Lord exhorts His own to live in sobriety and vigilance, so that they will be prepared for His Great Day (cf. Lk 12:35); otherwise, if they fall asleep like the rest of humanity, it will catch them by surprise and they will be unprepared (v. 35-46).

Sleepiness means not recognizing the signs of the times. One thinks he lives in peace and security; but he ignores what is actually happening. In this numb state, one confuses the false peace that the world gives with the peace that only comes from God. I will mention as an example a situation that has been troubling me for many years: Can there be true peace in the world as long as the right to live of unborn children is not assured? Can we speak of peace when they are being killed by the millions? Whoever seriously asks these questions will come to the conclusion that under these conditions it is impossible to speak of true peace, for peace cannot count only for those who already see the light of the world, but must be for everyone.

If we think of the times of the Antichrist, which, according to what is predicted, will precede the Second Coming of Christ, then we can imagine, based on serious prophecies and authors, that it will be a time when apparently many problems of humanity will have been solved. But in reality the Antichrist will only seek to erect a political and spiritual dictatorship over mankind, and will want to turn men away from God and, consequently, also from their eternal destiny.

Man in a 'vigilant state', on the other hand, knows how to discern the spirits, recognizing what comes from God and what comes from other forces. Obviously, in order to do this, we cannot live in the darkness of sin and confusion; rather, we must be focused on God day by day and live in deep friendship with Him. Since we human beings are quarrelsome and darkness wants to take hold of us, it is necessary for us to live in constant vigilance.

It is very easy for us to become careless in our spiritual life, engaging in too many activities and forgetting our inner renewal.

We cannot allow ourselves to be deceived! Our human inclinations tend toward the superficial, and, because of original sin, we are inclined to evil, as the teaching of the Church teaches us. To this must be added the fact that *"the devil is on the prowl like a roaring lion, looking for someone to devour."* (1 Pet 5:8).

The spiritual life requires outward discipline as well as inner vigilance over our thoughts, words, feelings, etc. We cannot rely on our human nature! Rather, we must listen to the Spirit of God and allow ourselves to be formed by Him.

If we have this sobriety, we will be armed and will be able to put all our hope in the Lord. Whatever comes, it will not come as a surprise, because constant vigilance keeps us prepared for everything, including our death.

With this certainty we can also comfort and warn others. It is important to be aware that we are our "brother's keeper" (cf. Gen 4:9), so that we do not fail to support one another in the way of the Lord. If we notice that one of our brothers is not living soberly, let us ask the Lord to show us the proper way to warn him. If someone is falling into doubt, let us strengthen him in the faith.

Thus, in spite of the dangers that surround us, we will be able to walk safely in the paths of the Lord, knowing that He is watching over our lives.