

14. November 2021

Think about the end

Mk 13:24-32

*'But in those days, after that time of distress, the sun will be darkened, the moon will not give its light, the stars will come falling out of the sky and the powers in the heavens will be shaken. And then they will see the Son of man coming in the clouds with great power and glory. And then he will send the angels to gather his elect from the four winds, from the ends of the world to the ends of the sky. 'Take the fig tree as a parable: as soon as its twigs grow supple and its leaves come out, you know that summer is near. So with you when you see these things happening: know that he is near, right at the gates. In truth I tell you, before this generation has passed away all these things will have taken place. Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away. 'But as for that day or hour, nobody knows it, neither the angels in heaven, nor the Son; no one but the Father.'*

The liturgical year is coming to an end, and in these last weeks we are confronted with those biblical texts that show us how fleeting earthly existence is. Everything that promises us security does not last. Just think of an earthquake that can strike at any moment and shake everything under our feet. The earth, supposedly safe, begins to move; and in a short time everything can collapse. Certainly such a natural disaster is a sad and painful reality, and we can do our best at the human level to foresee such catastrophes and take the necessary safety measures. But, at the end of the day, human possibilities cannot provide us with ultimate security either.

Today's Gospel tells us about even more powerful events that will befall the world, and we would do well to take these words of the Lord to heart and learn the lesson He gives us as a conclusion: *"Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"*.

In theory, we Christians know this statement; but does it really mark our lives? Is it also earnestly reminded to us in sermons? Do we really seek our ultimate security in God and do we view everything else from this perspective? Indeed, everything is tottering in these times. Even the Church - the firm rock and the great security that we Catholics have always had - seems weakened and not sufficiently protected against the swell of this world, which attacks it.

It is evident that we men find it difficult to think of the end. We willingly settle into this world and make it our permanent dwelling place. This attitude is humanly understandable; but from a spiritual perspective it is very unwise, for we lose the strength and concentration of our soul, and we will hardly be able to perceive the signs of the times, which insistently point us to what ultimately counts, and, more precisely, remind us of the end towards which we are all heading.

What would it be like if we lived consciously awaiting the Lord's return? Wouldn't it change our whole approach? Wouldn't we then think more often about the end of the world, about the Last Judgement or about our own death? Wouldn't this help us to be vigilant and sensible (cf. Ps 90:12)?

Even if we do not know the hour of Our Lord's Parousia, we do know what He tells us about the end, which He concludes quite clearly in this statement: *"Sky and earth will pass away, but my words will not pass away"*.

Then, if only for the purpose of keeping us vigilant, it would be necessary that the so-called "last things" do not disappear from the memory of the faithful, so that we do not fall asleep spiritually and are aware of the seriousness of our life decisions.

But that is not the only reason to think about the last things; moreover, if we fail to do so, we are not living in God's reality. Then the Day of the Lord's Return will come like the "thief in the night" and we will not be prepared (cf. 2 Pet 3:10). Then it might be too late, as the parable of the foolish virgins implies (cf. Mt 25:1-13). How much we would still like to do this or that! But it might be too late...

God the Father, in His Wisdom, has not revealed to us the precise moment of the Lord's Return, perhaps also so that we may always be waiting for Him and not postpone our conversion until the last day. In fact, conversion is not only about saving us from eternal damnation; it is about rising from the dead, living in fullness and discovering the deepest meaning of existence. It is a true awakening from the confusion and lethargy of a merely earthly oriented life. And if we continue to awaken more and more, becoming aware of the eschatological dimension, our life will acquire that vigilance which leads us to wait for the Lord as a bride waits for her husband, and to work perseveringly in His vineyard.