

10. March 2022

The Law and the Prophets

Mt 7:7-12

Ask, and it will be given to you; search, and you will find; knock, and the door will be opened to you. Everyone who asks receives; everyone who searches finds; everyone who knocks will have the door opened. Is there anyone among you who would hand his son a stone when he asked for bread? Or would hand him a snake when he asked for a fish? If you, then, evil as you are, know how to give your children what is good, how much more will your Father in heaven give good things to those who ask him! So always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets.

In reality it is not so difficult to keep God's Law. Reading the last sentence of today's Gospel, it is immediately obvious what "the Law and the Prophets consist of". But the difficulty arises when it comes to putting into practice what we recognise in theory to be the right thing to do.

"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you; that is the Law and the Prophets. This is what the Law and the Prophets are all about".

If we reflect honestly, it will not take us long to know how it is that we should behave towards other people. Just consider how we would like to be treated... Here are a couple of examples: normally we all like to be treated with respect. If there has been a conflict, we would all like the other person to understand what we meant, and no one would like to be misunderstood.

If we apply today's gospel teaching to these examples, we will have to make a serious effort to be sympathetic to others and put aside our hasty prejudices.

We could now look at any number of behaviours, also those that we do not like in others. For example: If we realise that we have been treated unfairly and that the other person did not make any effort to clarify the situation, but simply wanted to be right, we would probably feel hurt. So what is the lesson we can draw from such situations? Let us honestly ask if we ourselves have acted like this in similar circumstances.

We see, then, that if we really put this Word of the Lord into practice, it will be for us a constant school in the love of God and of our neighbour. Our soul is very sensitive, so that we tend to perceive clearly whether we have been hurt or whether we have been treated in the right way.

Let us take laughing at a person as another example. Let us ask ourselves: How do we do it, do we do it in an attitude of superiority towards them, or do we make fun of their weaknesses, or is there something offensive in our laughter?

If we take the Word of the Lord seriously, we must also ask ourselves on the other side: How do we react when someone laughs at us? If it is an offensive and hurtful mockery, we will be hurt in our honour. On the other hand, if it is a joke to help us see something with more distance, we may even join in and laugh at ourselves.

We can take this criterion: let us evaluate ourselves carefully and never allow us to elevate ourselves above others.

I insist that we could list countless examples, and we can always conclude that what the Lord teaches us today is a true school of neighbourly love, if we put it into practice.

Scripture exhorts us to share our bread with the hungry (cf. Isa 58:7). How grateful we would be if someone were to offer us something to eat!

All this must be deeply engraved in our hearts and in our memory, recognising the wisdom that shines forth in Holy Scripture: *"Always treat others as you would like them to treat you"*.

How we all like to be loved and respected, to be supported and to receive good advice! Let us do this to others, and so we will fulfil the Law and the Prophets!

Prior to this wonderful teaching, the Lord invites us to ask with great confidence. If we ask, we will receive; if we seek God, we will find Him. God loves it when we ask properly; He loves it when we seek Him, for then the longing for Him grows in our hearts!

God wants us to understand what He is like. Therefore He gives us an example from human life: Would a father refuse to fulfil his son's just request? No, not at all! He will normally grant him whatever he asks for! And in the next sentence the Lord wants to underline once again the goodness of God: if we men, who by inclination are evil, are capable of giving love to our children, how much more God, in whom there is no trace of evil but who is pure love! How much more will He give to those who ask Him!

"Knock, and the door will be opened to you". Let us do it and be persevering in it! Let us do it for others and for our own spiritual growth!

The Lord Himself said: "*I am the Door*" (Jn 10:9). Let us knock at the door of the Heart of Jesus, which is always open to us!