

23. September 2022

Everything has its time

Eccl 3:1-11

There is a season for everything, a time for every occupation under heaven: A time for giving birth, a time for dying; a time for planting, a time for uprooting what has been planted. A time for killing, a time for healing; a time for knocking down, a time for building. A time for tears, a time for laughter; a time for mourning, a time for dancing. A time for throwing stones away, a time for gathering them; a time for embracing, a time to refrain from embracing. A time for searching, a time for losing; a time for keeping, a time for discarding. A time for tearing, a time for sewing; a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking. A time for loving, a time for hating; a time for war, a time for peace. What do people gain from the efforts they make? I contemplate the task that God gives humanity to labour at. All that he does is apt for its time; but although he has given us an awareness of the passage of time, we can grasp neither the beginning nor the end of what God does.

The great wisdom contained in this text is synthesized in its opening words, *"There is a season for everything!"*

There are two distinct Greek terminologies to refer to time: the term "chronos" and "kairos". The first - "chronos" - alludes to time in general, which passes in the months, in the passing of the years, in the return of the seasons, etc...

The term "kairos", on the other hand, refers to the precise moment to act. In the Christian context, we can understand it as follows: Now is the time of grace; this is the hour of salvation! (cf. 2 Cor 6:2b) Since our Lord accomplished the work of Redemption, the hour of salvation has been inaugurated for all men. In this sense, the "kairos" is a rather broad period of time, to which salvation is offered to all, and whose end is known only to God. But we can also understand "kairos" in a more concrete sense. For example: now is the precise moment to follow my vocation or to do a certain thing; now the Lord wants this or that from me...

So, if I act now, if I take this or that step now, I am acting in conformity with the grace that God has arranged for this precise moment.

Today's reading conveys to us wisdom for life in general, telling us that there is a time indicated for each thing and that in this way we arrive at the balance of life. But in following Christ we can understand this even more precisely.

Let us take an example from the reading: *"There is a time for keeping silent, a time for speaking."* We, as disciples of the Lord, have received the missionary mandate, that is, we all have to bear witness to our faith, regardless of whether or not we have received a special gift of eloquence in speech. This mission encompasses our whole life! It is a matter of that commission given to us by the Lord so that we may not only welcome our own hour of salvation, but also help others to be touched by the grace of Redemption or to assimilate it more deeply.

If we take the terminology of "kairos" and "chronos", we can say that we Christians live in a constant "kairos". Thus, we can assume that, if we proclaim the Word with pure intention, we are acting fundamentally in conformity with God's Will. But, within this broad perspective of "kairos," there may be certain moments that are particularly opportune for transmitting the Word; or, on the contrary, for keeping silent. In order to identify when it is time for one and when it is time for the other, we must listen very carefully to the Holy Spirit, who comes to our aid with the gift of counsel.

Let us recall, in this context, some aspects of the gift of counsel: The Holy Spirit reminds us of all that Jesus said and did (cf. Jn 14:26). He dwells in us and advises us how to apply the Lord's words to the concrete situations of our lives. Thanks to the gift of counsel, we become capable of perceiving the silent voice of the Holy Spirit speaking to us interiorly and of distinguishing it from other voices. This gift is perfecting and bringing to fullness the virtue of Christian prudence. Prudence, as we have seen in recent meditations, teaches us to contemplate everything from God's perspective. However, because of the imperfection of our nature, we can still be left with uncertainty. Therefore, we need that inner light, an illumination that allows us to discover the Will of God in any instance: *"Speak, Lord, for your servant is listening"* (1 Sam. 3:10).

In this way, the Holy Spirit will be able to advise us with clarity and help us understand when the time has come to speak and when the time has come to be silent. If we act according to the precise indications of the Holy Spirit, we will be at the heart of the "kairos".