

14. January 2023

Love and truth

Mk 2:13-17

*Jesus went out again to the shore of the lake; and all the people came to him, and he taught them. As he was walking along he saw Levi the son of Alphaeus sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. When Jesus was at dinner in his house, a number of tax collectors and sinners were also sitting at table with Jesus and his disciples; for there were many of them among his followers. When the scribes of the Pharisee party saw him eating with sinners and tax collectors, they said to his disciples, 'Why does he eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When Jesus heard this he said to them, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners.'*

Today we have heard one of the central words of Jesus, which again and again we have to remember and deepen: *"It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. I came to call not the upright, but sinners"*. The Church has been sent to the sick and sinners! This will be her mission until the end of time!

While the people of Israel had to isolate themselves from other peoples, so as not to be contaminated by their sins and not to be infected by their errors, the coming of Jesus changed this situation. The scribes found it difficult to understand this change. But the Lord gives them an answer, to help them understand the new reality.

Now the Church is called to go in search of people, to proclaim to them the divine love in the power of God. She knows that she is sent by her Lord! How many heroic missionaries the Church has had and still has, missionaries who proclaim the Gospel even under the most difficult circumstances and have mercy on people's sufferings!

We, for our part, must deepen our conversion more and more, so that sin loses its hold on us more and more and cannot hinder the work of the Holy Spirit. Many people, who are still entangled in sin and perhaps do not even know what this means, are in need of our authentic witness, both through our words and our whole being. How disappointing it is when someone is able to utter great words, full of fire, but his life witness is very far away!

The Lord seeks people, to give Himself to them. He enters into the life of a sinner and leads him to conversion. Therefore, we, as Christians, do not cut ourselves off from the sinner, for whom Jesus gave his life; but we do cut ourselves off from sin as such. It is God, in his mercy and his desire to save, who calls man to conversion and a change of life.

Unfortunately, in certain circles of the Church today there no longer seems to be a full awareness of the seriousness of sin, of its destructive power. Attempts are made to discover and appreciate positive aspects in relationships that are in themselves disordered. The consequence of this is that the objective sinful situation in which people find themselves, and from which they should come out, is forgotten. If one emphasises only the positive elements of a sinful relationship, such as a free union or homosexual relations, one relativises the drama of the alienation from God and the danger for the soul living in such a situation. Furthermore, it would not be realised that every sin is a rejection of God's love.

In the encounter with the adulterous woman, Jesus shows us how we should deal with sinners. He does not accuse her, he does not throw stones at her; but he tells her clearly: "*Sin no more*" (cf. Jn 8:3-11).

Jesus comes to save in an attitude of love. Love is a fundamental "yes" to the person and wants the best for the person. In our following of Christ, we are called to acquire the same attitude. Let us try to see people as God sees us, as the Lord treats the adulterous woman: in love and in truth. This means that we should not judge the sinner; but we should make him see what God's Will is, and help him, as far as we can, to turn away from evil ways and enter the paths of salvation. Neither despise the sinner, nor relativise sin... Love and truth are indissolubly linked!