

11. June 2023

Essential Points in Evangelisation

Mt 9:9-13

'As Jesus was walking on from there he saw a man named Matthew sitting at the tax office, and he said to him, 'Follow me.' And he got up and followed him. Now while he was at table in the house it happened that a number of tax collectors and sinners came to sit at the table with Jesus and his disciples. When the Pharisees saw this, they said to his disciples, 'Why does your master eat with tax collectors and sinners?' When he heard this he replied, 'It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick. Go and learn the meaning of the words: Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice. And indeed I came to call not the upright, but sinner.'

Today the Lord gives us three indications that should always accompany us in our evangelistic attempts:

- *"It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick."*
- *"Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice."*
- *"I came to call not the upright, but sinner."*

Let us ponder a little on each of these phrases of the Lord.

1. *"It is not the healthy who need the doctor, but the sick."*

The Lord knows the depths of man's soul, and sees the diseases that inhabit us. They are diseases of all kinds, which need to be cured. The more man turns away from God, the more the sicknesses of the soul increase and can become a permanent burden. It is not only about those illnesses that manifest themselves outwardly, but also about those that are hidden and known only to the Lord, such as inner emptiness, overwhelming loneliness, complexes that have not been overcome, fears, among many others... Jesus looks with love on our sick souls, and wants us to do the same as He does. It is precisely these people who need God's help, and this is what Jesus makes us see! Those who are healthier also need the Lord; but the sick are especially in need of Him. We must always keep this in mind in evangelisation!

2. *“Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice.”*

Mercy is God's basic attitude towards His creatures and children. He, who possesses fullness in Himself, abases Himself in His love to us, who are all imperfect and needy. This mercy has nothing of arrogance in it; it does not want to humiliate us as does the proud one, who wants to make the other feel that he should not really have to give him anything, and that if he does so it is only because he is so “merciful”. No! God's mercy comes from His loving Heart, lifts and draws His creatures to Himself, fills their hearts with joy and fills them with gratitude. True mercy has the eternal salvation of the person in the first place in view, for this is the decisive point of his life. Within this goal of leading man to eternity, mercy, always moved by the same love, also takes into account all the other needs of the person.

God's mercy, which is offered to us daily, asks us also to be merciful, for we are called to be perfect like our heavenly Father (*cf. Mt 5:48*). In other words, we must learn to deal with people in the way God does. That is why the Lord reminds us that we must first of all convert our hearts: *“Mercy is what pleases me, not sacrifice”*. This certainly does not mean that we cannot make sacrifices out of love, offering them, for example, for the conversion of sinners. But the essential point is that we learn to treat people in His love - this is the transformation of the heart - for out of a loving heart will come good works, and its sacrifices will be permeated by this light.

3. *“I came to call not the upright, but sinner.”*

The same as we have said about the sick, applies similarly to sinners. Their state is not only that of a sickness - though we might say that it is a kind of spiritual sickness - but the sinner is in flagrant contradiction with God, and therefore also with himself and with the whole meaning of his existence as a creature. This will become even clearer when we see that people are actually called to live as children of God. The consequences of sin are fatal and incalculable, both in terms of their eternal destiny and their earthly life. From this perspective, sinners are the poorest in this world; they are the ones who need our help the most, even more than the sick and the materially poor, because their eternal salvation is at stake, and it is not just a question of material help, however important it may be.

That is why the Church can never cease to call sinners to conversion. All other activities must be subordinate to this first mission. The first rank cannot be given to those forms of service which are secondary. People who live in contradiction with God, with themselves and with their reason for living are those who are particularly in need of hearing the proclamation of the Lord, who wants to forgive them their faults and lead them to eternal life.