

18. July 2023

## The consequence of truth

Mt 11:20-24

*'Then he began to reproach the towns in which most of his miracles had been worked, because they refused to repent. 'Alas for you, Chorazin! Alas for you, Bethsaida! For if the miracles done in you had been done in Tyre and Sidon, they would have repented long ago in sackcloth and ashes. Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Tyre and Sidon on Judgement Day than for you. And as for you, Capernaum, did you want to be raised as high as heaven? You shall be flung down to hell. For if the miracles done in you had been done in Sodom, it would have been standing yet. Still, I tell you that it will be more bearable for Sodom on Judgement Day than for you.'*

What kind of spirit manifests itself when we no longer want to listen to the clear words of Jesus? What kind of spirit is it that presents us with an unsalted Gospel and would like to harmonise it with the spirit of this world? Certainly not the Holy Spirit, for He reminds us of all that Jesus said and did (cf. Jn 14:26). This same Holy Spirit would remind us of Jesus' reproach to the cities of Chorazin and Bethsaida, and would make us question the state of faith in this world today, especially in those places where the Gospel had already been proclaimed. The Gospel is not compatible with this soft philanthropy, which rejects the exhortation to conversion and the demand for truth.

And what is needed is precisely true conversion, that is, conversion to God! Chorazin and Bethsaida, as well as Capernaum, had witnessed the presence of Jesus. They had seen His miracles, which speak a clear language and are a great help when words are not enough. In that sense, the responsibility of these cities was great, and the refusal to convert weighs heavily on them, as we can deduce from the Lord's words. We cannot simply pass over this severe reproach and pretend to harmonise everything.

Nor is it all the same to the people of our time whether they accept the gospel or not. While it is true that no violence of any kind - be it physical or psychological - should be used to get the Gospel accepted, we cannot lose sight of the fact that it is the most important message for all people in this world. Deliberate rejection of the Gospel has consequences, because we men are committed to the truth. Therefore, not only are all

efforts to pass on the Lord's message worthwhile, but they are an "obligation of love". Just as St. Paul speaks of the proclamation of the Gospel as a "duty incumbent upon him" (cf. 1 Cor 9:16), so all those who have had a true encounter with the Lord and love people have the clear task of helping others to know Jesus, who can say of Himself: *"I am the Way; I am Truth and Life"* (Jn 14:6).

Who among us would like to have to hear one day, when he finds himself in the Presence of God, that he did not fulfil his mission as he could have done? We can certainly take refuge in God's mercy in repentance, if we have not closed ourselves definitively to Him. But does not the very thought that such a thing might happen already pain us? Would it not be a burning shame if we were shown those souls we could have touched if we had fully accepted God's invitation? Would it not pierce us with an intense pain of love if we knew that the Heavenly Father was counting on us, but we, through neglect, produced less fruit than we could have done?

All these words and reflections are not a threat from an "all too just God"; they are simply consequences that correspond to the uniqueness of our Redemption. If there is one message that never loses its urgency, it is the Gospel, and the Gospel needs its messengers! Thus it says in the Book of Isaiah:

*"Then flew to me one of the seraphim with a fathom in his hand, which with the tongs he had taken from over the altar, and touched my mouth, saying, 'As this has touched your lips, your guilt is removed, your sin is atoned for.' And I perceived the voice of the Lord saying, 'Whom shall I send? Who will go for us?' And I said, 'Here am I, send me'"* (Isa 6:6-8).

We Christians have been washed in the blood of the Lamb (cf. Rev 7:14), and again and again we can purify ourselves in it through the sacrament of confession. And we have been sent!

In the present world crisis, it becomes all the more urgent to proclaim the Gospel and to turn to the Holy Spirit, so that we become aware of this "mission of love". The true Gospel, which does not conform to the spirit of the world, must be proclaimed. It would not help people if the Church would even confirm them in their wrong ways.

The gospel must be proclaimed in season and out of season, as the Apostle of the Gentiles writes to Timothy: *"Proclaim the message and, welcome or unwelcome, insist on*

*it. Refute falsehood, correct error, give encouragement - but do all with patience and with care to instruct. The time is sure to come when people will not accept sound teaching, but their ears will be itching for anything new and they will collect themselves a whole series of teachers according to their own tastes; and then they will shut their ears to the truth and will turn to myths” (2 Tim 4:2-4).*

Isn't St. Paul describing our times accurately here? So the exhortation to proclaim the Gospel authentically, according to what God has given you, is also still valid for everyone. He will reward us for it!