

16. October 2023

The responsibility of faith

Lk 11:29-32

When the crowds were increasing, Jesus began to say, "This generation is an evil generation; it seeks a sign, but no sign shall be given to it except the sign of Jonah. For as Jonah became a sign to the men of Nin'evah, so will the Son of man be to this generation. The queen of the South will arise at the judgment with the men of this generation and condemn them; for she came from the ends of the earth to hear the wisdom of Solomon, and behold, something greater than Solomon is here. The men of Nin'evah will arise at the judgment with this generation and condemn it; for they repented at the preaching of Jonah, and behold, something greater than Jonah is here.

The Lord gladly listens to our requests when they correspond to His plan of salvation. However, He is not willing to perform signs and miracles when an evil heart is demanding them. We are well acquainted with the passage in which Jesus three times rejects the Devil in the desert, when the latter tempts Him to perform signs and miracles (cf. Mt 4:3-4). His motives were evil.

True supplications addressed to the Lord are free from any magical conception, even if they are presented to Him with insistence and urgency. God acts in love and truth, and every intention presented to Him must proceed from love and truth.

Today's Gospel speaks to us of the Judgment. We are familiar with various Gospel passages which, in this context, point to the need to perform the works of mercy, for what we do to one of the least of these we do to Jesus Himself (cf. Mt 25:40). Thus, the Lord has laid out a clear path for us so that we can be approved on the Day of Judgment.

In today's Gospel, allusion is made to another aspect of God's Judgment, which is in line with the other biblical statements on this theme and which appears repeatedly in many other parts of Scripture. It is about the responsibility that comes with faith. *"Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required"* (Lk 12:48). The coming of Jesus into the world and the grace of God that comes to us from this event is far greater than anything that has gone before in human history. In all the prophets of the Old

Covenant the presence of God was manifested; they were the voice of God and the people were accountable for having listened to or ignored what they said.

The Son, on the other hand, is the very Word of God; He is God made man (cf. Jn 1:14). Therefore, grace is greater than anything that has gone before, and the light shines more brightly than ever upon the world.

As today's Gospel tells us, at the Judgment it will be those who have received less grace who will testify against those on whom a greater light has shone.

We can understand this very well when we consider, for example, all the riches we have received in the Catholic Church compared to the incomplete knowledge of God that many Protestants have. But we often feel ashamed when we see the great faith and zeal of Protestants or the fervour of people of other religions. These experiences can serve as a jolt to take our faith more seriously!

We can make a sincere plea to the Lord, asking Him to allow us to discover more deeply the treasure we have received and to help us to give authentic witness to our faith. God will respond to such a request with great joy!

Our time in life is limited, and Saint Paul exhorts us to make good use of it (cf. Eph 5:16). Sacred Scripture challenges us to take seriously the warnings given to the people of Israel and to reflect on our own responsibility as Christians.

Each warning is intended to make us aware of the seriousness of a situation, so that we can mobilise all our energies to make the right decisions. This does not mean that we should be afraid of God, but rather that we should not waste the hour of grace (cf. 2 Cor 6:2), nor ignore the voices of warning, whether they come from without or from within.