

19. November 2023

## The Lord's Day

1 Tes 5:1-6

*But as to the times and the seasons, brethren, you have no need to have anything written to you. For you yourselves know well that the day of the Lord will come like a thief in the night. When people say, "There is peace and security," then sudden destruction will come upon them as travail comes upon a woman with child, and there will be no escape. But you are not in darkness, brethren, for that day to surprise you like a thief. For you are all sons of light and sons of the day; we are not of the night or of darkness. So then let us not sleep, as others do, but let us keep awake and be sober.*

If I could choose one word that should be part of the dominant concepts in relation to the return of the Lord, it would be the term "vigilance". Vigilance is overcoming the habit and lethargy that so easily envelops us human beings. Vigilance means that the soul is focused on the essential, living in what is called "kairos".

Indeed, the very fact that our earthly life is limited by death should teach us the importance of vigilance. If, thanks to faith, we have understood that this life is less than the blink of an eye compared to eternity, and that in eternity our closeness to God will depend on the extent to which we have reciprocated His love here in this world, then we will live in fruitful vigilance. Now is the time to act! Now is the time to "*lay up treasures in heaven*" (cf. Mt 6:20)! Now is the time to demonstrate our love for God, day by day! We have only this life entrusted to us by the Lord, and this is the time that belongs to us!

Man's attachment to the things of this world can be so strong that nothing can really awaken him to understand the signs of the times. Nothing can move him to perceive the true situation of life and to respond to it appropriately. Neither, therefore, will he be able to recognise the coming of the Son of Man by the signs that precede it. In these circumstances, man is totally unprepared.

There is a vigilance that makes man aware of the dangers that threaten him and leads him to adopt the right attitude towards them: *"if the householder had known in what part of the night the thief was coming, he would have watched and would not have let his house be broken into"* (Mt 24:43).

But there is also a vigilance of love: it is the vigilance of those souls who await the return of the Lord and work with great fervour in His vineyard. In such souls the love of Christ has already been awakened, and they can even hasten His coming, as the Apostle Peter says: *"Since all these things are thus to be dissolved, what sort of persons ought you to be in lives of holiness and godliness, waiting for and hastening the coming of the day of God!"* (2 Pt 3:11-12).

With regard to the spiritual life, which is given additional dynamism by the conscious expectation of the Lord's return, both attitudes of vigilance are important and complementary.

The vigilance of love, which means that the presence of the Holy Spirit is growing in us, makes us very attentive to perceive even the slightest of the Lord's desires, and also leads us to strive diligently to fulfil in a spirit of piety the tasks that the Lord has set for us in our lives, our duties of state.

But at the same time, a vigilance inspired by the Spirit of God is also aware of the dangers that surround us. The great trust in God that comes from love does not make us blind. It does not lead us to an attitude of trusting naivety that does not know how to evaluate situations, but it makes us see things from God's perspective. Vigilance, then, is not an anxious tension or an overestimation of evil; nor is it a mere optimism that "all will be well".

As for the return of the Lord - which, as we have heard, we can even anticipate through our love - we know the signs that will precede it. The Lord describes them to us and even points to them so that we may know that His coming is near.