

10. December 2023

The patience of God

2 Pet 3:8-12

Do not ignore this one fact, beloved, that with the Lord one day is as a thousand years, and a thousand years as one day. The Lord is not slow about his promise as some count slowness, but is forbearing toward you, not wishing that any should perish, but that all should reach repentance. But the day of the Lord will come like a thief, and then the heavens will pass away with a loud noise, and the elements will be dissolved with fire, and the earth and the works that are upon it will be burned up. 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[b] the coming of the day of God, because of which the heavens will be kindled and dissolved, and the elements will melt with fire!

Do we still believe in these clear words of St Peter? Are we aware of the great responsibility we have before God and before others?

It seems that today the proclamation of the Gospel focuses more and more on God's mercy, while the call to conversion takes a back seat. We must be very careful not to lose the balance, because if the proclamation is only positive, these strong words of the Apostle could be forgotten, and people could think that they do not need to change their lives.

The patience of the Lord! Sometimes one wonders why the Lord takes so long to intervene in the negative events of this world. In today's reading, Saint Peter gives us a decisive answer. The Lord has the salvation of all people in mind; He wants all to be converted and to come into His Kingdom.

As we have heard in today's reading, God's times are different from ours, and only He has the overview, with all the different perspectives of a situation. And his gaze is a gaze of love, constantly inviting people to change their lives according to this love.

When we look at the critical situation in which the world finds itself, with all its confusion and absurdities, we could say: *"Dear Lord, why do you not put an end to so many things and circumstances at once?"* And perhaps we can say this to Him, unburdening our hearts to Him and expressing our weariness with so much evil. Even in the Book of Revelation, we hear that the martyrs *"cried out with a loud voice, "O Sovereign Lord, holy*

and true, how long before thou wilt judge and avenge our blood on those who dwell upon the earth? Then they were (...) told to rest a little longer" (Rev 6:10-11).

Time and its end are in God's hands, but today's reading suggests that the Lord's coming can be hastened. Through our personal conversion and struggle for holiness, we prepare for His return. And it is very wise to live in vigil, consciously awaiting our meeting with the Lord, whether at the hour of our death or at His parousia at the end of time. We must not lose ourselves in our earthly life or become so attached to it that our longing for Heaven is extinguished or relegated to the background, to the point of falling into the lethargy of mere habits.

Though the Lord is so patient with us, His day will come, and it had better find us well prepared. The certainty that God is so good should not make us lazy; it should spur us all the more to practise the works of love. The Day of the Lord is coming: let us go forth to meet it with a life of following Christ.