

8. January 2024

## The “Kairos” in the Christian life

Mk 1:14-20 (Reading from the Novus Ordo)

*After John had been arrested, Jesus went into Galilee. There he proclaimed the gospel from God saying, 'The time is fulfilled, and the kingdom of God is close at hand. Repent, and believe the gospel.' As he was walking along by the Lake of Galilee he saw Simon and Simon's brother Andrew casting a net in the lake - for they were fishermen. And Jesus said to them, 'Come after me and I will make you into fishers of people. 'And at once they left their nets and followed him. Going on a little further, he saw James son of Zebedee and his brother John; they too were in their boat, mending the nets. At once he called them and, leaving their father Zebedee in the boat with the men he employed, they went after him.*

If Jesus calls, we must respond without delay. The story we have heard today about the vocation of the first four apostles leaves no doubt about this. Here we can also understand those other words of the Lord, when He said to His disciples: *"You did not choose me, no, I chose you; and I commissioned you to go out and to bear fruit, fruit that will last; so that the Father will give you anything you ask him in my name"* (Jn 15:16).

The unconditionality of the call and the Will of the One who calls leave no room for delay. We can discover this readiness to respond in most of those who were called: we see it in Mary, the Mother of the Lord (cf. Lk 1:38); in St. Paul; in the apostles; and in so many others who have followed the Lord throughout the history of the Church. Time is pressing: nothing can come before service in the Kingdom of God. For this cause, one must be willing to leave everything behind.

Of course one has the right - and even the spiritual obligation - to examine whether this is a genuine call from God. But as soon as we recognise it as such, we must immediately follow the One who calls us and be faithful to the vocation.

The unconditionality of a call of the Lord does not only refer to a radical decision involving a total change of life, as it happened here in the case of the disciples or in other similar vocations. Whatever He commissions us to do is a call from Him, although in varying degrees of intensity. Thus, God's call extends to our whole Christian life, and turns it into a constant "Kairos".

When we speak of "Kairos" in this context, we refer to the moment of grace, the "now". NOW the Lord is calling me; NOW is the time to respond to Him; NOW God is speaking to me; NOW I must follow Him.

We can discover this "Kairos" - the "now" - throughout the gospel. Jesus Himself, when he weeps over Jerusalem, laments, saying: *"If you too had only recognised on this day the way to peace! But in fact it is hidden from your eyes! (...) because you did not recognise the moment of your visitation"* (Lk 19:42-44).

Thus, the whole Christian life becomes a wake-up call, for it is NOW, in the short time of our life, that we can serve the Lord; it is NOW that we can cooperate in the salvation of souls, with our life and our prayer; it is NOW that we can obtain merits for eternal life.

The great enemy of this "Kairos" attitude in the Christian life is spiritual lethargy, being too involved in the affairs of this world, without keeping the necessary distance from it to be able to imbue it with the power of God. If our inner eyes are drowsy, we cannot see or hear God's call in the concrete situations of our lives.

Sacred Scripture laments those who *"have eyes but see nothing, have ears but hear nothing"* (Ps 135:16b-17a). It is about those who are not awake to God's call; those who are closed in on themselves; those who are unwilling to go out of themselves to serve God; those who do not leave their nets and abandon their father, as the apostles did; those who do not want to leave the life to which they are accustomed... In the worst case, it will be that their hearts have become hardened.

Now, neither should we believe that being awake to God's call means a nervous, tense and exaggerated attention to everything around us. It does not! Rather, it is a spiritual watchfulness, which God's own Spirit works in us. Just as Jesus spoke specifically to each disciple, so the Spirit of God speaks to each one of us. Just as the disciples followed the Lord, we too must follow the promptings of the Spirit.

In conclusion, I would like to address a word to parents: there is nothing greater for children than to follow an authentic call from God! The vocation is above family obligations, and it is greater than the plans and ideas parents have for their children's future. The Gospel we have heard today does not tell us that Zebedee would have withheld his sons James and John, when Jesus called them. The call of God must be answered, for it is a great honour and an obligation of love towards God and man!

Blessed are the children who hear the call and follow it, and blessed are the parents who support them and do not withhold them!