

30. September 2024

Living in vigilance

Mt 13:47- 52

Reading corresponding to the memorial of St. Jerome

Again, the kingdom of Heaven is like a dragnet that is cast in the sea and brings in a haul of all kinds of fish. When it is full, the fishermen bring it ashore; then, sitting down, they collect the good ones in baskets and throw away those that are no use. This is how it will be at the end of time: the angels will appear and separate the wicked from the upright, to throw them into the blazing furnace, where there will be weeping and grinding of teeth. 'Have you understood all these?' They said, 'Yes.' And he said to them, 'Well then, every scribe who becomes a disciple of the kingdom of Heaven is like a householder who brings out from his storeroom new things as well as old.'

The End Times will come, even if in our daily lives we do not keep it very much in mind. Spiritual drowsiness, which often accompanies us, is an evil, for if we were to think more about our personal end (death) or the End Times, our level of vigilance would increase considerably. It is also part of Christian prudence that we reflect on our actions. Good deeds, arising from a heart surrendered to God, will be rewarded by His love. But, above all, we must be aware of useless actions, which distract us; and, even more, of bad deeds, which bring judgement upon us.

Lack of vigilance is one of the great human weaknesses, both in regard to the promptings of the Holy Spirit and in regard to handling the temptations and distractions that come our way. In reality, the Christian life should be a daily training in the "school" of the Holy Spirit, which causes us to grow and mature. This may sound demanding in view of the routine that often marks our rhythm of life. But we can understand this demand when we realise that in everything we do, we can serve the Lord (cf. 1 Cor 10:31). If, when we wake up, we devote our first thoughts to Him and take the time to meditate on His Word and to be with Him in silent prayer; if, from this morning encounter with God, we find the "spiritual thread of the day", i.e. what He has arranged for that particular day, and if we then strive to do everything out of love for Him, then we will constantly grow in love.

Just as human love makes us attentive to the other person, spiritual love makes us even more attentive to God's desires and to the needs of the people entrusted to us. This vigilance will make us ever more attentive to the promptings of the Holy Spirit, for it is He who brings to fulfilment in us the work of sanctification, and it is He who calls us to collaborate in the evangelisation of this world. By being aware of the indwelling of the Holy Spirit in us, we will learn to follow His promptings better and not to ignore His warnings, which seek to preserve us from both the useless and the evil.

This inner guidance can become very fine, so that our whole life is focused on God and we awaken more and more to love. If we embark on this path, we can already in this life separate the bad fish from the good fish, with the help of the holy angels. The good fish will be gathered by the Lord for eternity, while the bad fish will be immersed in the sea of His forgiveness.

One last point for meditation today: let us remember in our prayers those who have not yet awakened to God's love or who have lost it again. They are so in need of conversion, so that they may be saved by the judgement of mercy before the day of Judgement comes.