Balta Lelija

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“Pray without ceasing”

Lk 18:1-8

Then Jesus told them a parable about the need to pray continually and never lose heart. 'There was a judge in a certain town,' he said, 'who had neither fear of God nor respect for anyone. In the same town there was also a widow who kept on coming to him and saying, "I want justice from you against my enemy!" For a long time he refused, but at last he said to himself, "Even though I have neither fear of God nor respect for any human person, I must give this widow her just rights since she keeps pestering me, or she will come and slap me in the face." And the Lord said, 'You notice what the unjust judge has to say? Now, will not God see justice done to his elect if they keep calling to him day and night even though he still delays to help them? I promise you, he will see justice done to them, and done speedily. But when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?'

What a strong exhortation, this parable of the widow, who was so insistent that the judge finally gave in and did as she asked! This is a divine invitation to not lose heart in our prayer, and to knock again and again at God's door, even when it seems that the pleas are not being heard. If it is a prayer that pleases the Lord, He will not ignore it.

But His answer does not necessarily come at the time that corresponds to our expectations. It is not a delay because God was reluctant to fulfill our just request - as in the case of the judge in today's parable - but because the Lord knows perfectly well the circumstances in which it is best to fulfill what we have asked Him in our prayer. We can understand this well if we compare it with the way we treat children. Let us suppose that the child has a legitimate desire, which one would gladly like to fulfill.... However, it turns out that the circumstances are not yet right and the immediate fulfillment of their wish might even be detrimental to them. So one listens to their desire and carries it in the heart; but waits until the right time has come to make it come true.

In the book of Revelation we find a clear example of a valid request that God does not fulfill immediately. He has not, however, forgotten it. We read in the sixth chapter:

"When the Lamb broke the fifth seal, I saw underneath the altar the souls of all the people who had been killed on account of the Word of God, for witnessing to it. They shouted in a loud voice, 'Holy, true Master, how much longer will you wait before you pass sentence and take vengeance for our death on the inhabitants of the earth?' Each of them was given a white robe, and they were told to be patient a little longer, until the roll was completed of their fellow-servants and brothers who were still to be killed as they had been." (v. 9-11)

At the end of today's Gospel, the Lord poses a question that evidently pains Him and in reality should also pain us: *"when the Son of man comes, will he find any faith on earth?"*

If we were to answer this question today, we would unfortunately have to note that faith has become weak. In not a few nations of the Earth, which have already received the proclamation of the Gospel, faith has faded. The time is coming when we must speak of an apostasy; that is, a decline of faith. The new generations that are growing up are not being instructed in the message of faith in a natural way. The importance of the Church is diminishing in many countries. She, which for friend and foe used to be the firm rock in the face of the swell, now seems to be corroded by the "spirit of the times" and hardly radiates the security she once offered to her faithful.

What, then, shall we answer Our Lord?

Perhaps we could say to Him: "Look, Lord, there are still people of faith. To be honest, there should be many more; there should be many more who are eagerly awaiting you and working fervently in your vineyard.... What can we do? Give us, Lord, a very strong faith, stronger than the one we now have, so that at least your faithful may truly believe! This being so, perhaps others will also be touched by this faith."

In a part of the Message that God the Father entrusted to Sr. Eugenia Ravasio, he tells us the following:

"If there is something that I desire, above all now, (1932) it is simply to see more fervour on the part of the just, a smooth path for the conversion of sinners, sincere and persevering conversion, and the return of the prodigal sons to their Father's house. I am referring in particular to the Jews and to all others who are My creatures and children, such as the

schismatics, the heretics, the freemasons, the poor infidels, the sacrilegious, and the various secret sects..."

It will be best for us to ask for strong faith and for others to find their way to God. Such a prayer will certainly please you, Lord, and you will not delay in fulfilling our plea.