

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 23 June 2024

Scriptures: Job 38:1,8-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-17; Mark 4:35-41

Homily: Fr. Ken

A prominent theme from this weekend's scripture readings is God's gratuitous love as the source of our joy and of our courage to face the adversities and perplexities of our lives.

The fourth chapter of Mark's Gospel includes a number of parables on the kingdom which conclude with the narrative of this Sunday's gospel. The kingdom of life and justice is a gift from God. To have faith means to welcome that grace and to make its demands as our own. There is a subtle way of not believing, not trusting in the Lord: it is simply being afraid. It is subtle because it does not seem like rejection, but one is called to look at life more in depth. In the passage for this Sunday, fear is established as equal to the lack of faith: "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

The gospel of Mark is often more critical in tone, though it is the same idea in both cases. If there is faith, there is no fear. The harsh conditions in which the poor of the world are living, the violence present in the world, and the discouragement that this produces, are serious challenges for the evangelizing task of the church and, therefore, for each one of us. Faced with this situation, some find reasons not to see reality as it is; in this way they try to escape from the commitments that a truly evangelical attitude demands. They are afraid of losing their present security—or their privileges—and they refuse to assume total availability to the will of God.

This gospel reminds all of us that fear in the presence of the challenges of the gospel hides something very grave: a lack of faith.

We tend to be afraid of what is new. We feel comfortable with our mediocrity, and we prefer to travel on known roads where those we encounter will greet us rather than question us. We are inclined to cover the message which is always life and newness in old frameworks. The principal norm of such an attitude seems to be our peace and tranquility first, then the demands of the Gospel.

But as we heard in Sunday's second reading from Paul's 2nd Letter to the Christians living in Corinth, "if anyone is in Christ, there is a new creation: everything old has passed away...everything has become new" (2 Cor. 5:17).

Being in Christ requires imagination and creativity placed at the service of others. Christians are people who constantly invent forms of loving, not in formal compliance of a duty but in terms of concrete persons, our neighbors, especially the most needy, today's poor and oppressed. This requires not being narrow-mindedly distracted by the problems we invent to avoid looking at inhuman reality face to face and to stay on grounds that do not question us. St. Paul says, "the love of Christ urges me on" (verse 14). Let us experience this same urgency.

The first reading from the Old Testament Book of Job, at the start of a series of questions placed in the mouth of God, tells us that God's gratuitous love is present in the world order and that it gives meaning to everything. That love is the deepest source of our joy. But it is also always demanding that we be open to God and to the lives of others. If there is faith, there is no fear of difficulties and threats. Although there is no rest either, there is profound peace.

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