

16. June 2020

“The 'Ahabs' of this world have to convert”

1. Kgs 21,17-29

Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Up! Go down to meet Ahab king of Israel, in Samaria. You will find him in Naboth's vineyard; he has gone down to take possession of it. You are to say this to him, "Yahweh says this: You have committed murder and now you usurp as well. For this -- and Yahweh says this -- in the place where the dogs licked the blood of Naboth, the dogs will lick your blood too." 'Ahab said to Elijah, 'So you have caught me, O my enemy!' Elijah answered, 'I have caught you! For your double dealing, and since you have done what is displeasing to Yahweh, I shall now bring disaster down on you; I shall sweep away your descendants and wipe out every manjack of the House of Ahab, fettered or free in Israel. I shall treat your House as I treated the house of Jeroboam son of Nebat and of Baasha son of Ahijah, for provoking my anger and leading Israel into sin. (Against Jezebel too Yahweh spoke these words, "The dogs will eat Jezebel in the Field of Jezreel.") Those of Ahab's family who die in the city, the dogs will eat; and those who die in the open country, the birds of the air will eat.' And indeed there never was anyone like Ahab for double dealing and for doing what is displeasing to Yahweh, urged on by Jezebel his wife. He behaved in the most abominable way, adhering to idols, just as the Amorites had, whom Yahweh had dispossessed for the Israelites. When Ahab heard these words, he tore his garments and put sackcloth next to his skin and fasted; he slept in the sackcloth; he walked with slow steps. Then the word of Yahweh came to Elijah the Tishbite, 'Have you seen how Ahab has humbled himself before me? Since he has humbled himself before me, I shall not bring the disaster in his days; I shall bring the disaster down on his House in his son's days.'

Guilt, repentance and the Lord's mercy are the great themes of today's reading!

Ahab was, unfortunately, one of the many kings of Israel who are said in Scripture to have done things that displeased the Lord!

We have already spoken of the responsibility that fell on the kings in particular with regard to the people, and of the devastating consequences if the people were also tempted to idolatry by the bad example of the kings! What responsibility! But who will make it clear to the king that he is wrong and acting against God?

It is the prophet of the Lord who has the courage to proclaim the truth! The true prophet must only be fulfilled by this task and must not keep silent out of fear of man or out of false consideration! Then, however, it can happen to him, as it happened to Elijah today: *"So you have caught me, O my enemy!"* The king Ahab says to Elijah when he visits him on God's behalf: a complete reversal of the true situation!

However, it is often the case that when people live in lies and injustice, they often consider the one who is telling the truth as their enemy. The truth, however, is that they themselves have fallen into enmity with God!

The big question arises, and I will ask it again and again: "Who is going to rebuke the politicians of today when, for example, as in Ireland, they allow the killing of innocent children and in other countries.

Where are the Elijahs of today?!

The prophetic voice of the Church seems to have become generally very weak! What a tragedy!

We can see from today's example what can happen when the prophet speaks the truth and shows the King the consequences! After all, Ahab is frightened and begins to repent!

Better he repents out of fear of God than not repenting and ignoring the prophet's word out of megalomania and self-importance!

Even if the king's repentance is imperfect and he certainly does not yet have a true insight into all that he has done to God and his people, God does recognize his first steps and spares him all the consequences he had announced to him in his lifetime.

Today, in the time after the coming of Jesus, God offers us the way of conversion in His Son! The "Ahab" of this world can come to the cross and can receive forgiveness if they are serious! They do not have to do the same repentance exercises as Ahab in the Old Testament, but they must repent sincerely, abandon their evil and deluded ways and ask God for forgiveness!

Will they do it? Who will tell them? Who is not afraid of them?

We can at least pray for them, and especially look at those who in their confusion bear great guilt! How will they be able to meet those whom they have done wrong?

There are too many "Ahabs" who continue in their blindness and rule this world without caring about the commandments of God! And there are too few "Ahabs" who repent after the speech of the Prophet, at least in the beginning! But - and perhaps the "Ahabs" can reproach us for this: There are few who have the courage to tell them the truth.

The shepherds of the Church are too often silent and so the "Ahabs" can continue their ways without correction! Certainly: God still has ways to intervene and we can hope for that! But this does not absolve us from the need to perceive the prophetic mission in the Church more clearly! Our Catholic Church must not degenerate into a club of people only to say YES, but must be salt of the earth and light of the world (*cf. Mt 5,13-14*)!