

30. October 2020

“The Sabbath was made for man”

Lk 14:1-6

Now it happened that on a Sabbath day he had gone to share a meal in the house of one of the leading Pharisees; and they watched him closely. Now there in front of him was a man with dropsy, and Jesus addressed the lawyers and Pharisees with the words, 'Is it against the law to cure someone on the Sabbath, or not?' But they remained silent, so he took the man and cured him and sent him away. Then he said to them, 'Which of you here, if his son falls into a well, or his ox, will not pull him out on a Sabbath day without any hesitation?' And to this they could find no answer.

If we add to the above text the statement of Mark 2, verse 27 *“The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath”*, then we come across a decisive statement and many considerations are linked to it! Some even think that this statement of the Lord can be applied to other commandments!

However, if we look closely, it is not a matter of relativizing the commandment of the Sabbath! Jesus wants to lead us to the right understanding of this special day! It is made for man to think of God, to enjoy His presence, to be free of the usual business and much more! For the believing Jews the Sabbath has a great significance and we can take many of these things very well into our lives!

The problem with today's text is that the Pharisees and others were in danger to see the meaning of the Sabbath in a special way in the fulfilment of a regulation, and therefore thought that they were acting justly! This had to be corrected by Jesus! The commandments are there for man and if he keeps them, the grace of the Lord unfolds in him! However, if he restricts the commandments to only outward fulfilment, then he does not become sufficiently aware of the inherent grace and is therefore not able to understand either the breadth or the depth of God's instructions! The result can certainly be a hardening of the heart!

For example, if we look at marriage and the commandment not to break it, we see that we are dealing with a very high value. After all, it should reflect the relationship between God and man or, as St Paul says: the relationship of Christ to the Church! (*cf. Eph 5:25*) In addition, the spiritual-bodily union between man and woman is so deep that a break in this relationship can cause a person to be so hurt

so that it is very difficult to heal, to mention only some of the essential elements concerning marriage!

The commandment thus protects the uniqueness of marriage, both in its transcendent meaning and in its inner human dimension, and in the fulfilment of the commandment the grace of the Lord unfolds! Jesus reminds us, especially in the context of marriage, that it is not enough to be outwardly faithful, but that it is enough to break the marriage in one's heart just by looking at a woman lustfully (*cf. Mt 5:28*)!

This example makes it clear that Jesus is not relativizing the commandments, as some people misinterpret the statements about the Sabbath! The Sabbath is a wonderful day, which is awaited with great joy by the Jews! When in Jerusalem, where I could be more often, the Friday evening comes and the horn sounds, it becomes quiet in the city! You can see the Jews hurrying to the Wailing Wall or to a synagogue for the approaching Sabbath.

In the Jewish celebration of the Sabbath, there is a place where believing Jews turn to the door. It becomes quiet and they greet symbolically the Sabbath.

I have often thought about what this could mean in the light of the revelation of the New Testament! The Sabbath is the day on which God rested. It says in *Genesis 2:2-3*

“On the seventh day God had completed the work he had been doing. He rested on the seventh day after all the work he had been doing. God blessed the seventh day and made it holy, because on that day he rested after all his work of creating.”

As we know, God also rests in his creatures who listen to him! Perhaps we can say that God celebrates His Sabbath in them! Who could be more appropriate for this than the Immaculate Virgin Mary! Perhaps the Jews unknowingly greet the Blessed Virgin Mary when they bow down before the coming of the Sabbath, which they consider the Bride of God!

What we can certainly learn from our older brothers is that we pay more attention to Sunday as the day of resurrection! It hurts to see how in some countries people work on these days as on others, and nothing of a Sabbath rest or Sunday celebration enters into people's lives!

The Virgin Mary, who appeared at La Salette, France, in 1846, complained very much about the work on Sunday, which was probably customary at that time, and thus did not realise the meaning of Sunday as the Day of the Lord and for the Lord.

So the Sabbath is there for man and to do good to him, as the Lord did, ennoble the Sabbath and does not violate the commandment!