

1. December 2019

“To be prepared for the second coming of Christ!”

Rom 13,11-14a

Besides, you know the time has come; the moment is here for you to stop sleeping and wake up, because by now our salvation is nearer than when we first began to believe. The night is nearly over, daylight is on the way; so let us throw off everything that belongs to the darkness and equip ourselves for the light. Let us live decently, as in the light of day; with no orgies or drunkenness, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy. Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ, and stop worrying about how your disordered natural inclinations may be fulfilled.

At the beginning of the new church year, the texts of the daily reading prepare us for the return of the Lord. Even though nobody knows time and hour apart from the father (*cf. Mt 24,36*), it is still necessary to be prepared.

The history of the peoples does not run into an unknown anything, but it is in the hands of God and the Lord did not leave us in the dark as to what is to come. Faith gives us the hope, and also the certainty, that the loving God, who has created us and delivered us, will call us near him in eternity and we will be with him forever. So we are invited to trust the Lord both in our earth time and after our earthly death. This trust in the loving Father also teaches us to understand all the events in our lives from God, even those who would scare us if God did not give us the key to our lives.

Both the reading and the gospel of today (*Lk 24,37-44*) speak of the spiritual sleep of man. However, man should realize in which situation he lives from God. Instead, like in the Gospel of today, people in their daily lives have not been foreboding and are unaware that the hour of the end of time- we could also include the personal hour of death - can suddenly come, like a thief in the night!

This sleep of which we are speaking may very easily occur if one does not observe the signs of the times or lead the life in spiritual vigilance.

The announced return of Jesus, the judgment at the end of time, the death, the opportunity to miss his life and thus to live in the eternal separation from God are

not threats that should frighten us, but realities that serve to keep us attentive. Our lives should consciously focus on the ultimate goal and try to overcome everything, which binds us disorderly to this life and thus makes us spiritually sleepy. If the dimension of the last things in the annunciation of the gospel is left out, people are deceived and remain in their sleep. They lose the great orientation of life.

God is our Father of infinite love. That is true and certain! But it is also true to his love to remind us to the consequences of a life in sin and to warn us against it. Which father would not warn his son if he went astray! Which teacher of the church can carry the responsibility for leaving the faithful entrusted to him unknown about the "last things"?

St. Paul exhorts his people to abandon all works of darkness and to carry the weapons of light. These are the two movements required to follow in the footsteps of Christ: the rejection of the darkness in us and around us, as well as the pursuit of the light of the Lord. Both are important!

For the first dimension especially self-knowledge is essential. We must learn to see ourselves without fear and false shame on our wrong attitudes, to notice the darkness of our heart. The Apostle admonishes the Roman community: *"Let us live decently, as in the light of day; with no orgies or drunkenness, no promiscuity or licentiousness, and no wrangling or jealousy."* Paul could extend here the list of things that keep people in darkness and thus in spiritual sleep. This is not pleasant for us humans to discover the own darkness, and surely we are easily tempted to ignore it or we do not want to notice these points.

However, this is neither helpful nor wise, because our "bad heart" is not transformed by overlooking our shadows. Also, then our religiosity is in danger of becoming artificial and lacks a healthy spiritual realism. It is also unwise because we have to be purified anyway in order to get into the kingdom of God. Everything that we do here on earth regarding the necessary purification and everything we let happen through the Spirit of the Lord, makes us grow in love and is also a blessing for our fellow human beings!

The other movement is: "Let your armour be the Lord Jesus Christ".

This is the transformation into Christ given to us by the Holy Spirit and in which we work to become as perfect as our Father in Heaven (*cf. Mt 5,48*).

In order to be prepared for the return of the Lord and to acquire the necessary vigilance, it is necessary to follow the path of holiness and also to observe the signs of the times which precede the second coming of Christ.

May God grant that our daily interpretations in 2020 will keep these two essential points of today's readings as a "leitmotif", that we await more and more the return of the Lord with love and vigilance!