

6. March 2020

**“A way to grow in love”**

*Mt 5,20-26*

***„For I tell you, if your uprightness does not surpass that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never get into the kingdom of Heaven. You have heard how it was said to our ancestors, You shall not kill; and if anyone does kill he must answer for it before the court. But I say this to you, anyone who is angry with a brother will answer for it before the court; anyone who calls a brother "Fool" will answer for it before the Sanhedrin; and anyone who calls him "Traitor" will answer for it in hell fire. So then, if you are bringing your offering to the altar and there remember that your brother has something against you, leave your offering there before the altar, go and be reconciled with your brother first, and then come back and present your offering. Come to terms with your opponent in good time while you are still on the way to the court with him, or he may hand you over to the judge and the judge to the officer, and you will be thrown into prison. In truth I tell you, you will not get out till you have paid the last penny.“***

With the coming of Jesus into the world, humanity receives a greater grace than it had during the time of the Old Covenant. We can see this, for example, in the regulations on marriage. In the Old Covenant it was still possible to have several women, without incurring sin; even though it was still an imperfect law, which God tolerated, so to speak, because of man's "hardness of heart" (*cf. Mt 19,8*). But in the New Covenant it is no longer like that! A marriage between two baptized persons is indissoluble. In this way, the original plan God had for the relationship between man and woman is restored.

Since humanity has received this enormous grace with the coming of the Lord, the demands have also increased. Today's Gospel shows us this. We will have to give an account for any anger or offence against our brother or sister, because the same power is already at work there, that can lead to concrete acts against him. Therefore, we must perceive in ourselves this power, and overcome it.

Let us look at what happens in the case of anger... Sacred Scripture teaches us that *"the anger of man does not do what is right in the sight of God"* (*James 1,20*). There will be few cases in which we can speak of a "holy wrath", such as that which is kindled in Jesus, when he sees that they have turned the temple into a marketplace (*cf. Mt 21,12-13*). When a person is angry, he usually believes he has

reason and right to be so, and he turns his aggression on the other person. This anger is often accompanied by a proud attitude, for he does not even realize that, in the midst of his unbridled outburst, he is going far beyond a just correction. How often anger has no justification, even if it seems to have one! The victim of that unjustified anger remains utterly defensive and hardly dares to speak at all, lest the other should become even more angry. Thus, very unjust situations can arise.

In short, we can say that anger has traits that can lead psychologically and morally to the death of the other. Anger is a world of injustice and unbridledness! In some way, it threatens the life of the other person, because it intimidates them and can make them fearful, especially when the outbursts of anger are repeated frequently. Unbridled anger is also a danger, because it easily leads to unthinking action, which has its own consequences.

This is why the Lord wants to make us understand the commandments more deeply. We are called to overcome anger inwardly, and, if we have an angry temper, we must calm it down and soften it with the influence of the Holy Spirit. We must become aware of the destructive force of anger, instead of justifying it or giving it little importance. The latter attitude would be totally opposed to what today's gospel says, and would rob us of the strength to recognize our error and take the necessary steps.

The same thing that we have said about anger also applies to offenses, which hurt a person's honor. Offenses are also an attack on his psychological life; they humiliate him and attempt against his dignity.

Here too we must be very careful. If we discover this kind of reaction in ourselves, we must take the necessary measures. And if we have already made a habit of offending or humiliating other people, we will have to fight constantly to overcome this attitude.

All these reflections will always lead us to emphasize the same point: we must implore purity of heart, and strive for it. The Mother of God will help us, through the strength of the Holy Spirit, to remove the shadows from our hearts, and to notice already the slightest deviations from the way of love and truth. A converted heart cannot tolerate them, minimize them or justify them. But, at the same time, this heart knows that the Lord has come to snatch us out of the kingdom of darkness. Therefore, it will confidently turn to him, asking for a new heart.