

11. August 2020

**“The importance of the vocation”
St. Clare**

Mt 19, 27-29

Then Peter answered and said, 'Look, we have left everything and followed you. What are we to have, then?' Jesus said to them, 'In truth I tell you, when everything is made new again and the Son of man is seated on his throne of glory, you yourselves will sit on twelve thrones to judge the twelve tribes of Israel. And everyone who has left houses, brothers, sisters, father, mother, children or land for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times as much, and also inherit eternal life.'

Today we take the text that the Church has foreseen for St. Clare of Assisi.

St. Clare was so inflamed by the example of St. Francis that she joined him, as did her younger sister Agnes. This provoked great resistance in her family, which had other plans for her. Even violence was used. But St. Clare did not let herself be diverted from her path and remained faithful to the vocation that had been given to her.

According to tradition, even before the birth of her child, her mother was shown in a dream that a light would emanate from the child to enlighten the Christian world. And so it was. St. Clare became the foundress of an religious Order. Later her sister Béatrice and her mother followed her into the convent. Even today there are still Poor Clare monasteries which cultivate contemplation.

Today's Gospel text fits very well to her life, because Clare left everything for the sake of Jesus.

The text and her life example invite us to reflect on the importance of a vocation. Certainly not everyone is called to this radical discipleship, but nevertheless such vocations exist and they are so precious that everything must take a back seat - even the closest family ties. Is this still recognised today, or is this vocational dimension being lost largely in accordance with the spirit of the times?

It is less and less understood today that in such a vocation one must leave everything behind. Even in some monasteries, not enough attention is paid to this,

so that religious, for example, devote too much time to family matters, to the detriment of their vocation.

A vocation such as that of St. Clare and that of the Apostles serves directly the Kingdom of God. Here the Word of the Lord becomes particularly luminous: "*Set your hearts on his kingdom first*" (Mt 6,33a) or "*Once the hand is laid on the plough, no one who looks back is fit for the kingdom of God.*" (Lk 9,62).

The following orientation is decisive for the fulfilment of such a vocation: "What serves the vocation that has been received and what does not?" Christian prudence must be applied in discernment. However, in order to follow such a call, it is necessary to be completely committed to God and no longer to cultivate natural certainties and habits. It is precisely these that then become an obstacle.

The example of St. Clare is a good example of this. If she had followed the desire of her family for a marriage in conformity with her status, neither her call, nor that of her sister and later even that of her mother would have been fulfilled. Today there would be no Clarissines to bless the Church, her mother's dream would not have been fulfilled. However, since Clare, supported by the grace of God, remained faithful to her vocation, she could become a light according to the meaning of her name.

There is nothing to be preferred to the immediate call of God, because it is principally fruitful for the Kingdom of God in another dimension than a life in the world. Therefore, I can only encourage everyone to let God show them sincerely whether such a call exists, and parents to support such a call and understand it as a special grace. As important as the family is, the call to a special vocation of Christ requires the family and its interests to take a back seat and turn completely to God. This is done out of love for God and thus becomes a blessing for all people.

At this point I would like to encourage religious to live their vocation fully and to have the appropriate distance to the world. Today, unfortunately, there is a tendency in the Church not to perceive this dimension properly and to realize it. But this means that something essential is lost. It would be similar if priests were too involved in worldly commerce and neglected their spiritual dimension.

The crisis in our Church is also related to the neglect of spiritual formation, which gives too much importance to worldly matters, and in this way the capacity for discernment is weakened and the primary task is easily lost sight of. It goes

without saying that one can then also face the temptations less clearly and the vocation suffers damage.

But also for people who live in the world and fulfil their vocation there, certain directives can become a guide. One can apply the sentence: "What serves the realisation of the kingdom of God and what does not?" and so direct the life more towards God.

May the shining example of St. Clare help us to live the vocation given by God completely and without false compromise.