

17. September 2020

“Love rules!”

*Lk 7, 36-50*

*One of the Pharisees invited him to a meal. When he arrived at the Pharisee's house and took his place at table, suddenly a woman came in, who had a bad name in the town. She had heard he was dining with the Pharisee and had brought with her an alabaster jar of ointment. She waited behind him at his feet, weeping, and her tears fell on his feet, and she wiped them away with her hair; then she covered his feet with kisses and anointed them with the ointment. When the Pharisee who had invited him saw this, he said to himself, 'If this man were a prophet, he would know who this woman is and what sort of person it is who is touching him and what a bad name she has.' Then Jesus took him up and said, 'Simon, I have something to say to you.' He replied, 'Say on, Master.' There was once a creditor who had two men in his debt; one owed him five hundred denarii, the other fifty. They were unable to pay, so he let them both off. Which of them will love him more?' Simon answered, 'The one who was let off more, I suppose.' Jesus said, 'You are right.' Then he turned to the woman and said to Simon, 'You see this woman? I came into your house, and you poured no water over my feet, but she has poured out her tears over my feet and wiped them away with her hair. You gave me no kiss, but she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in. You did not anoint my head with oil, but she has anointed my feet with ointment. For this reason I tell you that her sins, many as they are, have been forgiven her, because she has shown such great love. It is someone who is forgiven little who shows little love.' Then he said to her, 'Your sins are forgiven.' Those who were with him at table began to say to themselves, 'Who is this man, that even forgives sins?' But he said to the woman, 'Your faith has saved you; go in peace.'*

As if the Lord wanted to underline yesterday's reflection, today's Gospel tells us about this touching event! A gesture that can only be imagined by a woman who corresponds to her nature of devotion in such a wonderful, meaningful expression! How tenderly a woman can love when her heart is awakened to love! And Jesus accepts this gesture, he not only affirms it, but makes a profound teaching of it for the Pharisee and his guests - and for us!

But let us stay a little longer with the loving woman in her encounter with the Lord! According to the report she was a sinner! Obviously she was not closed in on

herself, and the encounter with the Lord opened her heart wide! We don't know whether she had already heard a lot about Jesus before and had already gained confidence through the testimonies, or whether it was just the encounter with Him! In any case, it was his presence that struck her heart, perhaps even without any special words! Her heart understood that there was someone here to whom she could come closer, to whom she could open herself in her depths, who loved her without wanting anything for himself, from whom she need not fear any condemnation of her person, in whose presence she could let herself fall! This is how tears come to her; perhaps a combination of remorse and joy! Repentance in the presence of the Holy One, in which sin becomes even more visible in its ugliness, but at the same time the acceptance of her person, that she will not be pushed back into her sin and hardened in it, but that a new life will open up before her eyes in the love of the Lord! Her heart overflows with gratitude, she cannot show enough of her love to Jesus: *“she has been covering my feet with kisses ever since I came in”*, the Lord says to the Pharisee! She has shown Jesus her love, she has been forgiven her many sins!

Some time ago I had the opportunity to speak to married couples and we came to the topic of how important the love between man and woman is. Then we talked about authority and I told the group that if the husband exercised true authority in the family, his wife would kiss his feet! I guess I was thinking of the scene in the Gospel today when I said this! When I looked into the eyes of the wives present, I felt that they understood what I was saying, because every woman understands it in depth! She is won through love!

In today's Gospel we see it! The authority of Jesus is one of love! Everyone who does not close his heart meets this authority and is willing to serve it! Jesus awakens the deepest in us, namely our ability to give a response to his love! It may find a different expression in the woman or in the man, but it is the same source!

Now the Lord wants us to live in this authority too, and it is perhaps a special reference for us men! We can win men by our being, if they know that they are loved by us! A man who truly loves inspires confidence! His authority comes not primarily from an office or from a position he holds in society! True and lasting authority comes through the realisation of love in us, the more the Lord takes shape in us! We cannot directly strive for it and achieve it with our will! It is a fruit of devotion to Jesus, the shaping of the image of God in us!

The world needs men and women in whom the love of Jesus unfolds! So they can become fathers and mothers of faith and make it easy for sinners to return to the

Father's house! As a rule, people are happy to submit to an authority of love and truth, because this authority lifts them up! The presence of Jesus brought out the best in the woman, namely, to show her love incessantly! This can happen when people experience the grace of conversion, when they meet the Lord in us!