

Commentary to the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time



The verses of Jeremiah proposed by the liturgy of today are an intense confession of the prophet. Many times the meaning of these verses has been interpreted in a positive way in the vocational key. While it is true, the words used are strong and relate to the vocational experience of the prophet. However, the words are loaded with a negative character. That is, they refer to God as an expression of reproach for the great difficulty facing the Prophet. It is the prayer of Jeremiah as a struggle before God. The man who speaks here feels deceived by God and reduced to a situation that does nothing more than to continually give him ridicule, ridicule and pain. Although the prophet admits that he also has some guilt ("I let myself be seduced"), the main responsibility lies with God, because he starts the initiative and is more powerful.

Why does the prophet suffer? Precisely because he is a prophet of God in a difficult context experiencing mockery and rejection for announcing the word of God. Jeremiah confesses to a situation without escape in which, if he speaks in the name of God, this leads him, on the part of others, derision and pain; And if he does not speak, the word burns him within, which in turn is the source of inner

suffering. In this prayer-confession of the Prophet it is understood that whoever has been commissioned to announce the divine word is inevitably destined to suffer, not as an end, but as a necessary means for the realization of God's will.

This same experience of difficulty is permeated in the gospel. Jesus addresses the disciples as representatives of the Christian community through instruction. On this occasion Jesus himself announces his death as a necessary consequence of the realization of the will of God. The center of this passage is the confrontation between human logic (represented by Peter) and the logic of God (represented in Jesus' reproof to Peter). Returning to Jerusalem was to be handed over to the authorities to be subjected to the greatest sufferings. It was to surrender without resistance, like a gentle lamb on the way to the slaughterhouse. This, from human logic, is absurd and meaningless.

The confrontation that the apostle Peter makes is the clear sign of this logic. This reaction of Peter provokes the instruction of Jesus to his disciples. Suffering is an integral part of following Jesus. The expression take the cross designates all suffering for the cause of Jesus. It means orienting oneself in Jesus as a model of life and knowing that the support comes from the Lord who was exalted by God. On the other hand, the follow-up begins with the invitation to self-denial - "to deny oneself" - which means renouncing one's own vital interests in the surrender of Christ.

The early Christians experienced suffering as a result of their follow-up. Christians in the Roman community had experienced the suffering of living their faith and proclaiming the gospel. Possibly they did not find sense to the suffering that they lived because of the rejection. Thus, in these two verses of chapter 12 of the Letter to the Christians of Rome, the Apostle Paul exhorts them to live the Christian life in the midst of a convulsed reality.

How is it possible to live fully the Christian life suffering the consequences of professing a faith that is rejected by others? First, by looking at the example of Jesus and imitating him in his unconditional surrender for the cause of the Father, the Kingdom of God. Secondly, realizing that this encomienda was not possible by the forces themselves, but by the gift of God that makes it possible. For Paul, baptism is the reality that makes life possible for the Christian life in spite of the conditions of humanity itself and of historical reality. Thirdly, baptism is also a mission, because it is the eternal seal of God that makes us sons and brothers urged to be brothers of all, especially those who threaten life. To the extent that we make our whole person available to God to serve the cause of good, we are being faithful to the baptism we have received. Paul's exhortation is to live the following of Jesus in an oblation way. Everything that we are, what we live, what we experience - good and bad - must be an offering to God, because our whole existence is the gift of God.

In our day we are also tempted to live in the dynamics of the conservation of our own humanity, our own ego, in short, our own interests. This is living from human logic. Today, more than ever, we are tempted to commit crime, to settle, to easily abandon our convictions; To sell the word - speaking to each person what he wants to hear - without being witnesses of the truth of Christ. The temptation to manipulate the Gospel message benefiting a few. The temptation to let us overcome by the fear of giving our lives for the cause of the Gospel, conditioning us to shut up and hide. The temptation to live the following of Jesus "à la carte" according to his own whims and desires, conditioning the message of God to the reality itself.

The invitation is clear and forceful: to live our Christian following from the logic of God. The logic of God is the logic of the gift. This logic is lived, firstly, from the awareness of the presence of God in life ("the Word of God is fire in the entrails, enclosed in the bones ...") that makes us bearers of his in the midst of reality. Secondly, we live from the oblation ("presenting the bodies as a living, holy, pleasing host to God") offering to God with gratitude what we have freely received, also difficulties and sufferings. Finally, we live from the radical follow-up of Jesus, which involves life as a generous surrender to God and the brothers. The best way to be grateful for the gift received is to live in fidelity and with joy the following of Jesus.

You can read the following commentaries of Fr. Armellini

First reading: Jeremiah 20:7-9

Second Reading: Romans 12:1-2

Gospel: Matthew 16:21-27

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