

Bishop D. Manuel's Homily for the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Dear brothers and sisters,

The Word of God of this Sunday places before us a demanding and liberating truth: God takes our freedom seriously. Therefore, in the first reading, from the book of Ecclesiasticus, we hear: "If you desire, you will keep the commandments... He has placed before you fire and water; stretch out your hand for whichever you wish." God does not manipulate us, does not force us. He shows the path of life, but deeply respects our decision. The relationship with God has to be founded on love and not on fear, and love is always free. God wants us as children, and therefore wants us free. Hence, says the author of Ecclesiasticus, the Lord places before us two paths: that of fidelity that leads to life, and that of infidelity that leads to death. And we are free to choose. To choose God and his commandments, his Law, his love, is to choose life. To reject God is to opt for the path of death.

The responsorial psalm, taken from Psalm 118, repeats like a happy refrain: "Blessed are those who walk in the law of the Lord." But that "law" is not a burden; it is a path of happiness. God does not give us commandments to limit us, but to protect and guide us. The problem is that, many times, we reduce faith to a minimum set of obligations: "I did not kill, I did not steal, I did no harm to anyone," therefore I have no sins. And it is precisely there that Jesus intervenes in the Gospel, pointing out to us paths of a radical love for the brother that is not limited to "not killing."

Jesus says to us, in the Gospel:

"Unless your righteousness does not exceed that of the scribes and Pharisees, you will never enter the kingdom of heaven."

What does that mean?

The Pharisees were rigorous in the external observance of the Law. But Jesus asks for something deeper: a righteousness that springs from the heart.

He says:

- It is not enough not to kill — it is necessary to root out anger, resentment, aggressiveness.
- It is not enough not to commit adultery — it is necessary to purify the gaze and the desire.
- It is not enough to keep oaths — it is necessary that the word be true: “Yes, yes; no, no.”

Jesus moves the center of morality from the exterior to the interior. He goes to the root, to the heart of sin. In fact sin begins in the heart:

Before the act, there is an intention.

Before physical violence, there is violence cultivated within.

Before concrete betrayal, there is interior consent.

With this Jesus does not want to complicate our life, but to show us that evil begins small, invisible, in the depths. And it is there that it must be fought.

Many times we think: “But that is impossible!”

And, in fact, alone it is.

Therefore, Saint Paul, in the second reading, taken from the First Letter to the Corinthians, tells us that true wisdom is not that of this world, but that which comes from God, revealed by the Holy Spirit.

Therefore, the struggle against sin, against evil, is not only a moral effort, but has the help of the grace of God.

To live the Gospel is not only discipline; it is gift.

For us to be saints is not only a path made with willpower; it is life in the Spirit.

Without the Spirit, the Law weighs. With the Spirit, the Law becomes a path of love.

What Jesus proposes to us is not a rigid moralism, but a radical love. He wants to form disciples whose hearts are like his.

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The Christian is not the one who tries “how far he can go without sinning,” but the one who asks: “How can I love more? How can I be more true? How can I be more pure of heart?”

God has set before us fire and water.

Every day we have choices before us:

- We choose to forgive or to feed resentment.
- We choose fidelity or duplicity.
- We choose truth or a convenient lie.
- We choose purity or superficiality.

And each choice shapes our heart.

Therefore, perhaps today we can ask:

- Is my heart reconciled or does it hold onto resentments?
- Is my gaze pure or self-interested?
- Is my word reliable?
- Is my faith only exterior or does it transform my interior?

God does not want only correct behaviors; he wants converted hearts.

Brothers, holiness is not for a few chosen ones, but is the normal path of the Christian.

And it begins in small daily decisions.

Let us ask the Lord:

- for a new heart,
- for an undivided heart,
- for a heart that chooses life.

May the Eucharist that we celebrate give us the strength of the Spirit to live not only the minimum of the Law, but the fullness of love.

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Let us pray:

Lord

You created us free

Free to choose

Death or life

Hatred or love

War or peace

Free to choose your paths

Of justice, truth and forgiveness

Or the paths of darkness

Of violence and war

Of hatred and oppression

You created us free, Lord

But we are only truly free

When we choose with you

the paths of love.