

OCTOBER 30, 2019 Wednesday of the 30th Week of Ordinary Time Weekday

Rom 8:26-30

Ps 13:4-6

Lk 13:22-30

It is the Holy Spirit who gathers us into the cry of all creation and of all humanity thirsting for salvation. Distracted by the daily concerns of life, we do not know what is really essential to ask. And so, the Spirit nourishes in us the question and hope of the true good that God has prepared for us. The Christian opens her heart to the Spirit, who transforms the entire universe's thirst for salvation into urgent invocation and expectation. The Father will not impose himself as a necessary solution, but he will fulfil this powerful desire of our hearts, which is like a long-awaited meeting of love. Created with such a longing, its satisfaction happens through invocation and free adhesion.

Our sin and our death are brought by the Holy Spirit into the divine communion of the Father and the Son. God, in his infinite and superabundant love, burns up within himself every form of evil, brings it back to its creaturely origin of good and truth, opening the door of salvation for all. "For those who stand by Jesus, evil is an incentive to ever greater love," Pope Francis wrote in his Message for World Mission Day 2018. Salvation, the fruit of Christ's victory on the cross thanks to the Easter of resurrection, becomes the content, the motive, the endpoint, and the method of every missionary commitment of his Church sent into the world.

Are there few who are saved (see Lk 13:23)? This was a very controversial question in Jesus' day and, perhaps, even today. And will we, whether simple or great, be among the blessed? The theme of salvation is central to Luke and is in the foreground in his Gospel. In fact, it is present even in the stories of Jesus' childhood: in the Magnificat, Mary rejoices in the Lord, whom she calls her saviour (see Lk 1:47); to the shepherds, the angel announces, "Today in the city of David a saviour has been born for you" (Lk 2:11); he is the "horn for our salvation" warmly welcomed by Zechariah in his Canticle, for he came to save his people from their enemies and to bring them the forgiveness of sins (see Lk 1:7-79). Jesus himself is the salvation that Luke announces with joy in his Gospel, the "a light for revelation to the Gentiles" (see Lk 2:32), as he likes to call him, citing Isaiah (Is 42:6; 49:6). This title corresponds perfectly to the new dawn of humanity, which begins when "the daybreak from on high" appears (Lk 1:78).

Human life is exposed to many threats: time, sickness, discrimination, oppression, hunger, death. Did Jesus have the power to save humanity? Paradoxically, Jerusalem closed her eyes so as not to see its light and the signs of God's salvation. These signs, in fact, were present in the evangelizing work of Jesus, as Luke emphasizes by using the term "save" even when referring to physical healing, as in the case of the woman who suffered from haemorrhages ("Daughter, your faith has saved you; go in peace," Lk 8:48), the leper ("Stand up and go; your faith has saved you," Lk 17:19), the blind man of Jericho ("Have sight; your faith has saved you," Lk 18:42), and the daughter of Jairus ("Do not be afraid; just have faith and she will be saved," Lk 8:50).

This characteristic is found in two other episodes: in the case of the forgiven sinner, to whom Jesus says, "Your faith has saved you; go in peace" (Lk 7:50) and in the conversion of the rich and corrupt Zacchaeus, after which Jesus says, "Today salvation has come to this house because this man too is a descendant of Abraham" (Lk 19:9). All these signs, however, require that the sick person, the sinner, and each person open themselves in faith to the ultimate dimension of salvation. Cures reveal the integral salvation brought by Jesus and accomplished in his Paschal Mystery. So, the evangelist speaks of a salvation that requires a change in the heart; repentance and conversion are necessary, accepting the Good News.

Jesus' response to the person who questions him on whether only a few people will be saved is remarkably complete and revealing, while opening a window on the horizon of human history. The Lord uses the metaphor of the narrow door to indicate the challenge facing those who want to enter into the promised salvation and the parable of the banquet of the kingdom to designate the criteria that allow the guests to enter the house of God.

To those who declare, "We ate and drank in your company and you taught in our streets" (Lk 13:26), the "master of the house" replies, twice, that he does not know where they come from. It is a terrible and unexpected condemnation against those who practice injustice with the claim of being his own and to have the right to salvation. The urgency of conversion in the "today" of our life is made clear in an extremely dramatic way. Many rich people have found Jesus, listened to his preaching, talked with him, and even invited him to dinner at home. But how many of them have accepted his request for conversion and solidarity with the poor, as did Zacchaeus?

The parable warns about the end result of the life choice of the insensitive and corrupt rich. "Woe to you who are rich" (Lk 6:24), Jesus had warned. Alerted, then, to the danger of wealth, which can prevent entry into the kingdom, the listeners ask, "Lord, will only a few people be saved?" The evangelist leaves no room for ambiguity. Those who imagine that the mere knowledge of the historical Jesus and his doctrine, or participation in his meals and liturgical practices, are a guarantee of salvation, even if they live in the sins of rejecting God, corruption, exploitation, or any kind of injustice, are very deceived. There is no compatibility between lack of faith, injustice, and salvation. All are called, Jews and pagans, but for all there is the same need to go through the narrow door. The violation of justice and human rights can close to us the door of the kingdom. The doorway is narrow, but it has not been closed yet. The door may yet be narrow (see Lk 13:24), but since Christ himself is the door of the Father (see Jn 10:7,9), the hope of being able to enter and be saved becomes stronger.

Luke warns us that this also applies to Christians. In fact, the title "Lord" given to Jesus in the parable is used only by those who recognize the saving power of this name. Jesus' warning is therefore also addressed to the ecclesial community, so that it does not make the mistake of presuming the guarantee of election, rather than following Jesus on the path of faith, hope, love, and justice. The rule remains valid: even those who are far from home, the last ones, the marginalized, the sinners, those of different culture and religion can become, with the practice of love and justice, the guests of honour at the feast of the kingdom.