

Monday's Gospel: Christ's Mercy

Gospel (*Lk 13:10-17*)

Now he was teaching in one of the synagogues on the sabbath. And there was a woman who had had a spirit of infirmity for eighteen years; she was bent over and could not fully straighten herself. And when Jesus saw her, he called her and said to her, "Woman, you are freed from your infirmity." And he laid his hands upon her, and immediately she was made straight, and she praised God.

But the ruler of the synagogue, indignant because Jesus had healed

on the sabbath, said to the people, “There are six days on which work ought to be done; come on those days and be healed, and not on the sabbath day.” Then the Lord answered him, “You hypocrites! Does not each of you on the sabbath untie his ox or his ass from the manger, and lead it away to water it? And ought not this woman, a daughter of Abraham whom Satan bound for eighteen years, be loosed from this bond on the sabbath day?”

As he said this, all his adversaries were put to shame; and all the people rejoiced at all the glorious things that were done by him.

Commentary

The woman in this Gospel passage had been bent over for almost twenty years without being able to

straighten herself. But she approached God; she went to the synagogue with the humility her illness had produced. Christ, who sees deeply into people's hearts, sees in that woman a simple and purified soul. He lays his hands on her and says: "you are freed from your infirmity." She is a precious image of the sacrament of God's mercy, of confession, in which Jesus frees us from the bonds of sin, blessing us with his hands to free us from evil. What deep joy that woman felt! She could stand up straight and easily look up at the sky. Her gaze met the eyes of our Lord and tears of gratitude ran down her face.

The Gospel then relates the angry reaction of the head of the synagogue, who puts the observance of a precept above mercy. The way he reacts hides his hypocrisy, and contrasts with the joy of the people when they witness the wonders Jesus

was working. The devil, the enemy of our holiness, does not want us to approach the merciful Heart of Jesus, and therefore places all kinds of obstacles – even quoting the Word of God! But we need to react firmly, going to our Lord and showing him with simplicity the knots entangling our soul, so that his mercy can untie them.

Were we to harbor any attachment to sin, we would live bent over without being able to raise our eyes to heaven, with our gaze lowered, occupied only with earthly concerns, as if God did not exist. Attachment to sin entraps us, causing us to withdraw into ourselves. The horizon of one's life narrows and one's best talents are wasted. The human heart has been born of God and has longings for the infinite, for Him. We can settle for the ephemeral, but that will never quench our deep thirst. Then one

walks as it were in a circle without moving forward; one betrays one's own self and any attempts to make one's life bear fruit begin to wither and end up being castles built of sand. Let us fill our hearts with the true longing that fulfills us, and that makes us stand upright, with our eyes set on heaven.

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