

Thursday's Gospel: the Fire of Love

Gospel for Thursday of the 29th Week in Ordinary Time, with commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 12:49-53*)

At that time, Jesus said to his disciples:

“I came to cast fire upon the earth; and would that it were already kindled! I have a baptism to be baptized with; and how I am constrained until it is accomplished!

“Do you think that I have come to give peace on earth? No, I tell you, but rather division; for henceforth in

one house there will be five divided, three against two and two against three; they will be divided, father against son and son against father, mother against daughter and daughter against her mother, mother-in-law against her daughter-in-law and daughter-in-law against her mother-in-law.”

Commentary

Jesus reveals to his disciples his heart’s deepest longing: his irrepressible desire to give his life out of love for all men and women, a love that is symbolized by the image of fire. Jesus is the light of the world (cf. *Jn* 8:12), and he is also fire and warmth. God appeared to Moses under the image of a burning bush that wasn’t consumed (cf. *Ex* 3:2-3), thus expressing his desire to free his

people from the oppression of the Pharaoh's power. Moses was the bearer of that divine fire, a fire that continued to burn throughout the history of salvation, until the climactic moment when Jesus, on Calvary, received "a baptism," the one he so longed for, when he died in the Cross, to free everyone from the oppression of sin.

Fifty days after that new Passover on Mount Calvary, during the feast of Pentecost, the Holy Spirit descended upon the disciples in the form of tongues of fire. Filled with the Spirit of God, the apostles announced to the people the good news of Jesus, and that day over three thousand souls were baptized (cf. *Acts* 2). It was a new baptism, through which those pilgrims and all Christians have received the fruit of the redemption that Jesus won for us on the Cross.

But Jesus knew that this fire of his saving love would encounter obstacles, causing division even within the same family. Already the elderly Simeon, after proclaiming the child Jesus as Savior of all peoples, announced to Mary that he would also be a “sign that is opposed” (*Lk 2:34*). But this division will not prevail: fire and light are more intense than cold and darkness. Christians, through baptism, are bearers of that same fire of Christ, and are apostles by divine vocation. As Saint Josemaría tells us: “With your apostolic life, wipe out the trail of filth and slime left by the corrupt sowers of hatred. And set aflame all the ways of the earth with the fire of Christ that you bear in your heart.”^[1]

^[1] Saint Josemaría, *The Way*, no. 1.

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