

Tuesday's Gospel: the Strength of Patience

Gospel for Tuesday in the 26th
Week of Ordinary Time, with
commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 9:51-56*)

When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem. And he sent messengers ahead of him, who went and entered a village of the Samaritans, to make ready for him; but the people would not receive him, because his face was set toward Jerusalem. And when his disciples James and John saw it, they said,

“Lord, do you want us to bid fire come down from heaven and consume them?”

But he turned and rebuked them. And they went on to another village.

Commentary

The brief episode that Saint Luke recounts in today’s gospel helps us meditate on the great value of patience.

A new stage in the Master’s mission is beginning: “When the days drew near for him to be received up, he set his face to go to Jerusalem” (v. 51). Our Lord is determined to go to the Holy City, where he will give his life for us. His will is firm, but an obstacle soon arises: the people in the town he needs to pass through refuse to receive him.

James and John are angry at the Samaritans' lack of hospitality and ask that the people be punished as an example: let the town be consumed by fire! The apostles' reaction may seem totally disproportionate. But the Old Testament has passages describing severe punishments for entire peoples, and even the Psalms have harsh requests that adversaries be punished: "Let burning coals fall upon them! Let them be cast into pits, no more to rise!" (*Ps 140:11*). Perhaps James and John think these punishments meted out in the past need to be repeated as an example.

But Jesus rebukes them. He already makes clear, with this simple gesture, what his attitude will be towards the people who will reject him at the time of the Passion. His answer is the need for patience. Jesus has saved us through his patience. As Benedict XVI said at the beginning of his pontificate: "God, who became a

lamb, tells us that the world is saved by the Crucified One, not by those who crucified him. The world is redeemed by the patience of God. It is destroyed by the impatience of man.”^[1] —

The Gospel tells us that Jesus continued on his way by another route. Jesus is willing to yield, but he refuses to halt his mission. Patience and understanding are not allies of passivity. On the contrary, these virtues enable us to find the most effective solutions, which are usually not sudden or violent. Patient love always bears fruit, even if it is in the long term.

^[1] — Benedict XVI, *Homily at the Inauguration of his Pontificate*, 24 April 2005.

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