

15TH Sunday in Ordinary Time A/2008

In this electoral period, there is something I like a lot when I observe the political contenders arguing over issues and defending their positions, namely the power of speech. It gives an idea of who the candidates are, what they stand for and how they can influence us. I also observe that when someone says to another “I love you”; the loved one starts smiling and feeling good. On the contrary, if he says, “I hate you”, the other feels bad, afraid and even get angry. All this shows that human words are a channel of energy; they have a power to touch and transform the lives of people. They can persuade as well as they can build or destroy someone.

In fact, through words, we can communicate feelings, exchange ideas, and influence people, etc. This is how we function in society and how we influence each other in a good or bad way. If human words are able to achieve such a goal, how much more would God’s words do? All today’s readings invite us to the discovery of the truth that the word of God is efficient; it means what it says; it accomplish what it means.

In the first reading, the prophet Isaiah reassures the people of Israel who were in exile that God has not abandoned them. The promise he has made to their ancestors to set them free remain valid and true in spite of their present hardships. For Isaiah, God’s word is true; it will accomplish what he has promised. Like the rain and the snow that come down and do not return till they have watered the earth, so shall the word of God achieve the end for which it was sent to people.

If the word of God is as efficient as the prophet says, how one explains the fact that not all the people accept it straightaway? Why are not people converted once they listen to it? This is the kind of questions the disciples of Jesus were dealing with as they realized that, instead of being accepted, Jesus’ message was simply rejected even by the members of his own family?

Jesus answers to these questions with the parable of the sower. For Jesus, the word of God is like seeds that a sower plants in a field. As the growth of seed that depends on the quality of the soil, so the success of the word of God depends on the dispositions of the heart of those who listen to it.

The dispositions of heart of the listeners are symbolized in the parable by the path, the rocky ground, the thorns and the rich soil. In that sense, we have four types of people corresponding to the quality of soil on which the seeds fall in.

First, we have the hearers whose heart is like a road surface. These are people in whom the word has no chance of gaining entry than the seed has no chance of developing on a path people trample constantly. The main reason that explains such an attitude, Jesus says, is the power of evil that steals away that was sown in the heart.

The second group is that of hearers whose heart is like a rocky ground. These are people at the mercy of every new craze. They live by the fashion and the mode. They drop things as quickly as they take them. They are enthusiastic for

everything and nothing, but never they last in what they have chosen. They are ready to start, but never finish what they have embraced. Jesus says that such an attitude is due to the lack of root.

The third group is that of hearers whose heart is worried with all sort of the problems of the world. They are so busy and preoccupied with many things that they do not give priority to the things of God. Their multiple preoccupations torment them like thorns that choke the seed to develop normally.

The last group is that of hearers whose heart is like a fertile soil. Like the good ground, they are open to the word of God as they listen to it, and act upon it. Such people understand what the Lord expects from them and strive to please him. Only those who do an effort to welcome the word of the Lord, to keep it and put it into practice are able to produce fruits.

What can we learn from this parable? This parable teaches us that in each one of us there can be a road surface, thorns and rocky ground. For that, it is important that we work to our conversion so that we make our heart a good soil for the prosperity of the word of God. This is an urgent task we cannot delay.

Another thing this parable teaches us is the hope we have to keep when facing difficulties and failures in life. First of all, about the word of God: whatever might be the difficulties it can encounter in the history of the world, in the end it will always bear fruit. God does not sow in vain. If some seeds fall on a road surface or a rocky ground, others fall on a good soil. This is the hope we bear for the success of the work of God.

With regard to ourselves, we are often discouraged when things do not work very well our way, like in the case of the education of children, their schools or life of marriage, etc. Here again, Jesus teaches us to hope and count on God. Whatever might be our failures in what we do, there is always a chance that even a small portion of our work may succeed. We have to be courageous, patient and keep working hard in hoping a harvest at the appropriate time.

However, it is true that in order to come to the success of our work, we have to accept pain, sufferings and challenge. St Paul tells that all that is nothing compared to the glory that awaits us at the end of our pilgrimage. In other words, the suffering of this world is a normal process we have to accept as it is. But in the end, we will be liberated by God who sets everything free including the natural world. Now, we are in the period of waiting, not only us, but all creation waits to participate in the redemption to come. We pray that we listen to this word of the Lord with attentive ears and act on it so that we produce lasting fruits. May God give us the grace of doing the right thing in the awaiting of our salvation! God bless you all!

Isaiah 55, 10-11; Romans 8, 18-23; Matthew 13, 1-23



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