

Let's be understanding, docile and merciful!

Homily, 16 October 2019 – Nelson Barbieri SDS

[translation]

Wednesday of the Twenty-eighth Week in Ordinary Time (I)
[Rom 2, 1-11; Ps 61, 2-3. 6-7. 9; Lk 11, 42-46]

The Word of God is always alive and effective. But there are times when it seems too hard to put our sin before our eyes. The words of the Apostle Paul are hard: no one has the right to glorify himself before God. Paul addresses those who, in a Pharisaic way, consider themselves righteous, and think that they do not need God's mercy and are judging others. "Everyone does this" is not a moral criterion for those who want to follow Christ. Becoming a judge of others does not free us from being judged. When we see someone mistaken, we easily think that we in his place would do better. In fact, one thing is to judge, and another is to do. Probably, instead of the brother we judge, we would do worse. This is what unfortunately happens so often in the moral and spiritual field. He who judges, although in some things he could be right, is seriously mistaken simply because he judges, because, as Jesus says, the most important thing is justice and love. The one who judges others is separated from them, putting himself in a situation of selfishness and pride. Putting oneself with humility and with the truth before the mercy of God is the great way of salvation.

God always invites us to conversion. While we live here, the Lord our God gives us opportunities to convert. Patience, goodness and tolerance of God are, therefore, an invitation for us to have an internal transformation and, consequently, a change of mentality and action. However, we are not always willing to assimilate this truth, always thinking that others need to be converted. Then we waste precious time wanting to influence the lives of others with our prejudices and our assumptions. That is why St. Paul warns us that the evil we see in the other and that we censor is the same that we also practice, saying: "That is why you have no apology, you who judge others, no matter who you are. In judging others, you condemn yourself, for you do precisely the same as they do." Because of our behaviour, we are accumulating anger, quarrel and enmity without realizing that God, as a just judge, will pay each of us according to our works. Instead of worrying so much about the lives of others, it would be better if we persevere in the practice of good, do our part and embrace the liberating mercy of the Lord. Therefore, God, the just judge, may judge each of us by our works, because he doesn't make any distinction between people. Before Him we all have the same value.

In the Gospel, Jesus speaks harsh words to the Pharisees and teachers of the law for the hypocrisy with which they take charge of the affairs of God's law. They demanded from the other sacrifices and unbearable burdens, but they themselves do not live what they preach. They paid tithing of all the profits they had but acted with injustice and lack of love. They did all possible to get the attention of the people for themselves and are similar to the graves that aren't seen, because they don't really show in a transparent way what they were. They wanted to express life being themselves death. Taking this word, we can also evaluate our attitudes and see if what Jesus spoke yesterday is right for us today. If our attitudes have as a parameter justice and the love of God, surely Jesus is not talking to us, because everything we do for love of God, will have his approval. However, even if we are paying tithing of everything we have earned, if we are present in all celebrations, in all retreats, but what is in our heart is not coherent with our actions, we are also worthy of censorship. "Woe to you," the Lord will say when we are demanding from the other what we ourselves do not do; when we want to call other people's attention to our "good deeds"; or when hypocritically, we do not do what we preach and thus deceive people. May the instructions of our Master serve as a light for our life and mission.

This is what we have to practice: love and faith. Love, because this is the command Jesus gives us. If we listen to his words, as He demands, we will hear that all he wants is for us to love God with all our strength, with all our being and with all our capacity and our neighbour as ourselves. That is all. Let us do with faith what He tells us, and we will defeat evil and death, reaching Eternal Life. Let's not be afraid. That is why Jesus has come, to give us confidence. Let's just listen and do what he tells us: and who is our neighbour? It is everyone who surrounds or accompanies us in any circumstance of life. Because all mankind are children of one Creator and Father and therefore, we are brothers. The same blood runs through our veins, regardless of age, colour of

skin or social or economic position. As good brothers, we all must love each other. Love has no conditions, nor expects anything instead. Let us love our brothers and we will reach Eternal Life.

Jesus tells us something more about love in these verses of today's Gospel. Love must be compassionate, merciful. It is not about putting burdens impossible to carry on the shoulders of others, while our load gets light. We should not demand from anyone other than what we ourselves are willing to give. Let's start there. Let's start by setting the example. If what we do is good and fair, it will pay off and our names will be registered in heaven. This is all that should matter to us. Let us strive to do good, to walk in the light, to speak with the truth. Let us be perfect, as our heavenly Father is perfect, trusting fully in Jesus, that he will do his part so that our seed may bear fruit when its time comes. Let us work tirelessly for the construction of the Kingdom, with love, faith and hope. Remembering that of these three, love is the most important. Let's be sensitive! Let us be moved! Our heart never should become hard as a stone! Let us leave behind breastplates and not impose demands beyond what we ourselves would be willing to cope with. Let's be understanding, docile and merciful!

