

*You have heard that it was said: “An eye for an eye and a tooth for a tooth”.
But I say to you, do not resist the one who is evil.*

Homily, 13rd June, 2016
Abbà Community monthly Mass

1 Kgs 21,1-16 and Mat 5, 38-42

father G. Paparone o.p.

First Lecture: 1Kgs 21,1-16

Let us approach with truth, simplicity and authenticity this page of the Scriptures that, although terrible, is definitely part of the Bible.

Let us try to understand it the way we have heard on Sunday the reprimand against David who killed his General and had taken his wife.

Today, let us meditate on another similar event, although on a different level.

What can we understand, how should we interpret this page?

Like a far past event, occurred time and time ago, that can be useful to us almost as a word of warning, of dramatic report, like an event among many that we read on the papers: a wife killed her husband, or a husband killed his wife...

Eventually, we feel that these are events that have no grip on us, have nothing to do with us because we feel we are better people, and we do not perceive ourselves as ever being able to do similar things...

Or, we can read this page as a teaching good at all times, and especially as **a light that God wishes to give us to make us understand the way we are.**

In other words, we are invited to think about Naboth, Achab and Jezebel, but rather about ourselves.

We have to try to understand how this page can enlighten our everyday life.

Indeed, I believe that it is only for this reason that the Scriptures passes these event onto us.

Not only the sacred Scriptures highlight sublime truths, inaccessible one... but speaks of **real life.**

What has just been read to us, might be a super-contemporary page!

What is the subject matter of this page?

It tells you about a situation that might occur everyday: a powerful man, a King, who wishes to purchase a vineyard, and expand his kingdom.

Let us think about those who wish to build “eco-monsters”, or illegal dwellings; let us think to those entrepreneurs who try to have in the Parliament their representatives so that they can lobby for them...

Here we are, we come back to this page: a King who wishes to purchase a vineyard, he has this wish; «Give me your vineyard, I wish to turn it into an orchard, because it is next to my home. I shall give you back a better vineyard than that, or, if you so wish, I shall pay it the price it is worth».

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Well, he never wanted to steal it from him.

And the other man: «I shall not relinquish the legacy from my ancestors!».

You can see here the different feelings of passions that we are all filled with....

Therefore, the man refuses to sell and the King feels somewhat depressed...

For a vineyard, then...

He must not have been a great deal of a King...

Yet, he was the King of the chosen people.

He wanted to buy that vineyard, the owner refused to sell it and he goes back home and falls into depression. That is exactly it. The passage actually reads: “Went to bed with his face turned on the side and did not have anything to eat”.

His wife then sets up a whole jiggy: sends letters, gets the steal, she replaces the monarch...

I wonder how many times these things happen! They say that behind a great President, a great King, a great Man, there is always a great woman who pulls the strings...

Therefore, the wife organizes it all, and as we have heard, some false witnesses are found and the owner of the vineyard is finally killed, his only fault is his refusal to sell his vineyard.

At this point, we must ask ourselves a question: **why is it that the Scriptures tell us about this event?**

To show us how we are inhabited by evil.

It warns us, so that we can distance ourselves from our passions.

It invites us to discover whether we can detect those mechanisms which crop up from time to time.

It might be that we too might be tempted to go great lengths, maybe in different ways....

Perhaps we do not physically kill anybody; maybe we do not do it because we fear of the consequences, yet **we may hold these feelings inside our hearts.**

I believe we have to take this page from the Scriptures with a great deal of realism, great attention and very seriously indeed, because it depicts our world.

This is our world!

Think of how many of these events we are constantly confronted with. Don't you all read on the papers countless instances of lobbying, pressure groups and the like, all trying to change reality

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according to their needs and wishes?

There are only two ways of being into this world:

- This one, where our wishes, willingness and our will that everything must happen according to our expectations, according to what we thought would be good to us;
- There is a option, opposite to the one adopted **christians**, that we have listened from the Gospel, through one of Jesus' teachings from the Sermon on the Mount (Mt 5,38-42):
"If anyone slaps you on the right cheek, turn to them the other cheek also", "And if anyone wants to sue you and take your shirt, hand over your coat as well", "If anyone forces you to go one mile, go with them two miles".

Think of Jezabel, Naboth, if one would have talked to them like this, they would have thought he was dumb and for a fool.

Because, one has to be slightly out of mind to be a Christian...

One must be a little crazy to be willing to live according to the Gospel...

If we are not slightly crazy, we cannot live according to the Gospel; we live through a hotchpotch, what I call a "mix of everything".

Yet, we solve nothing, we just remain who we are.

Being saved, means get into another world!

When one talks about the kingdom of God, what are we talking about?

About another world.

One enters another world with a different heart.

With another mindset.

With another lifestyle.

Otherwise, one always remains into another world.

One day, hearing these words, a scribe said to Jesus: *these words are harsh.*

Therefore, can one be saved?

Our Lord said: "This is impossible to men, **yet, for God all is possible**"

(Mat 19,26).

I wish to step back to the initial exhortation of the Eucharist: **what is the purpose of the Eucharist?**

It is not a prayer to compensate.

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It is not a form of anaesthesia.

It is not a food supplement.

The Eucharist is the opportunity we have to receive the same life as Jesus.

We need to be granted the actual chance of freeing ourselves from the mindsets described in the first lecture that are just selfish and self-centred, where you generate envy, greed, money, lies and trickery, and be able to adopt a new mindset.

Indeed, the Eucharist serves the only purpose of giving us a new heart.

If we do not wish to receive a new heart, if we do not wish to change our mindset, we simply eat a piece of bread and just drink a sip of wine, and that's that!

And, nothing will happen.

We came here with a mindset and will leave with the same mindset.

And we shall continue to live in the same way.

If, on the contrary, during the Eucharist we implore God, and we pray Him like the beggars, we ask Him to give us His Spirit and His grace, we ask Him to be the one who changes our hearts; then, step by step, day after day, we shall end up transfigured.

And we shall do and live what now seems impossible, because it is impossible for us now.

Yet, for God, everything is possible.

Let us continue the Eucharist with a moment of prayer, and let us implore our Lord to grant us this new heart.