

...*“Walk only in the way that I command you, so that it may be well with you”*
Yet they did not obey or incline their ear to my word.....

Homily, 3rd March, 2016

Jer 7,23-28

father G. Paparone o.p.

This is an extract from the prophet Jeremiah similar to others (from Jeremiah himself, from Ezekiel and Isaiah) in which is highlighted this hardness of heart of the people who had fled from Egypt, who continued not to put into practice the Word of God, despite celebrating their alliance with Him and commemorating the miracles He had performed in Egypt, in the desert.

The people of Israel kept following their own way, serving, as the prophets say, two masters: Baal and Yahweh and, despite this, God continued relentlessly, tirelessly, indefatigably to send prophets, the last of which was, as we know, John the Baptist, who prepared the path towards Jesus.

Even Jesus himself, as a man, can also be considered a herald of God, a great prophet, a man who tried to turn, as he himself said, *the heart of fathers to their children* (Luke 1:17) and the hearts of children to their fathers, in other words to realise reconciliation, harmony, communion.

The extract, however, tells us something else which is very important: the Lord knows that most people will not respond to the call of the prophet:

²⁵ From the day that your ancestors came out of the land of Egypt until this day, I have persistently sent all my servants the prophets to them, day after day; ²⁶ yet they did not listen to me, or pay attention, but they stiffened their necks. They did worse than their ancestors did. ²⁷ So you shall speak all these words to them, but they will not listen to you...

They will not listen to you: so, why does God, despite knowing that the people will not listen, continue to send prophets?

Well, I believe that even this is a big help, because the prophet is he who, through his invitation, highlights what is inside the heart of man, so that Man can be fully aware of what lives in him, of his willingness to embrace the Word of God, of the hardness of his heart, of the presence of evil which is in him...

Even this is a gesture of love from God: to help us to understand that we are inclined to what is evil; but the prophet doesn't have to worry about the response, rather only to let it emerge.

The prophet preaches the Word of God, he who is open to it welcomes it, he who is unreceptive does not. God knows this beforehand, but many perhaps don't know, perhaps deluding themselves, perhaps believing to be disciples of the Lord...

So, even this is a very big lesson because we have to know if we are listening to the voice of God.

If we don't put into practice His teachings, we have to acknowledge that we are not disciples of the Lord; certainly, we have to be discerning, to understand if we don't want to or if we can't...

This distinction is very important for we who follow the Lord, because we know that men, in order to

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embrace God's love, need His *grace*, whilst amongst the ancient people of the covenant there was the presumption that just listening to the voice of God was enough to put it into practice, and they were convinced that this depended only upon goodwill.

But God knows that it's not like that, that's why He was patient; He wanted to show men that, in order to embrace His Word, they need His help; knowing it is not enough, they also need His grace.

And so, dear Brothers and Sisters, **the first step that we have to make is to know whether we want to respond; and the second is to pray for the grace of God in order to put into practice His Word.**

Praised be Jesus Christ.