

The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath

Homily, 17th January 2017

Mark 2,23-28

father. G. Papparone o.p.

*The Sabbath was made for man, not man for the Sabbath.
So the Son of Man is Lord even of the Sabbath.*

Dearest,

These words are of fundamental importance, and their actual relevance in our daily religious, human, spiritual lives can never be overstated.

God came to free us from the *Law*, from the regulations, from everything that, in some ways, means to constrain our actions.

Then, what we need to understand is that **on the one side it is necessary to have some rules**, some laws, and some guidelines, so that the life of man can be organised in a true, authentic, meaningful manner and he can walk towards good.

On the other side, the material world too is governed by laws we cannot but abide by: we need to eat, sleep, respect the rhythms of time and so on; and it is the same for the moral law: we need laws and regulations; but there is a risk these will choke us.

In fact, laws are equal for all in their formulation, but they need individual implementation, specifically related to the situation that each of us is living in.

The risk for us men in fact is that we become “slaves to the Sabbath”, i.e. the laws, whereas Jesus came to remind us that the laws are made for men, and the good of man is above all regulations; we are talking about what is authentically, legitimately, necessarily and feasible good.

On the Sabbath, according to the Jewish prescriptions, it is not allowed to perform certain functions, for example the doctors could not exercise their profession.

But Jesus heals people!

Should we equate this to a doctor practising on a forbidden day?

Or, is Jesus he who frees us from disease, and, when meeting a sick person, cannot tell them “come back tomorrow”, because the sick desires and need to be freed as soon as possible?

May the Lord enlighten us, and help us understand this difficult relationship between observing the law, and freedom from the law; understand how to live the laws and regulations in accordance with what is truly, really, authentically good for each of us.

It is only the Holy Spirit that can guide us along this path; and so, let us pray, let us invoke the Holy Spirit every day, so that he guide us to this essential insight.

Thanks be to God.