

23rd Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)
(Isaiah 35:4-7 / Mark 7:31-37)
05.09.2021
Faint Hearts

Dear brothers and sisters,

“Say to all faint hearts,
Courage! Do not be afraid.
Look your God is coming...,
He is coming to save you.”

Who are these faint hearts of whom the prophet Isaiah speaks at the beginning of our first reading? They are people whose lives have collapsed and who are feeling downcast, fearful, anxious, depressed, lonely, tired, and even gripped by despair. This is an evocative description of some of the people of Israel at the time of the exile to Babylon. They feel abandoned, alone. They are inhabited by fear. They have no hope.

It happens that our own hearts also feel faint at times; we can feel, lonely, abandoned, and desolate because we have sent the three persons of the Holy Trinity who dwell within our hearts into exile, so to speak! Yes, dear brothers and sisters, our faith is that our hearts are temples of the Blessed Trinity. The teaching of the Sacred Scriptures is very clear on this point. How important it is for us to come back again and again to the words of the Risen Lord just before his Ascension; “I am with you always; yes, to the end of time” (Mt 28:20); or again to these words of Jesus in John’s gospel: “Anyone who loves me will keep my word, and my Father will love him, and we shall come to him and make a home in him”(Jn 14:23); or again to these words of St Paul in his Letter to the Romans: “You received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out: ‘Abba-Father’! The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God”. (Rm 8:15-16) All this is true: our hearts are inhabited by the three persons of the Holy Trinity, God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ and the Holy Spirit of communion. If we forget their presence, if we no longer pray to them, our hearts become faint and even lifeless. Little by little our hearts begin to look for other gods, and we start to follow them and become their slaves. Our hearts instead of being temples of God become enslaved hearts. We are no longer free men and women under grace, but slaves of our petty gods.

There are many ways for our hearts to become enslaved. Our hearts can be prisoners of other human beings whom we ask to be our God and fulfil our infinite desires. They are our idols! Obviously, this does not work for a long time, because no human being can fulfil our deepest longing. God alone can do it. If we ask another human being to be God for us, we are unfair to them. This is a case of abuse. It will never work. It is not a way that leads to life.

Our hearts can also be prisoners of things. We can be addicted to so many things. There are powerful addictions: Sex, drink, drugs, gambling and even work when we forget the importance of Sabbath! There are also what we consider to be minor addictions like computer, games addiction, cell phone addiction... But at the end of the day, the result is the same: These become

our petty gods, our idols; they lead us to forget the true God who lives within us and send him into exile.

When we become aware that we have forgotten God's presence within us and that as a consequence our hearts are enslaved, this is good news, this is God's work within us, this is a grace. We have to be grateful to God for it. Recognizing our enslavement, we enter anew into the way of salvation. The way to freedom, the way to salvation is to consent to open our hearts afresh to the presence, the indwelling of the three persons of the Holy Trinity deep within us and to come back to them in prayer. They will be able to look after our deepest desires, once we give them the possibility of doing so.

Suddenly, by grace, our eyes will open, our ears will be unsealed and our tongue loosened; those who are disabled will walk. We shall look at events, persons and nature, and we shall see them like God sees them. Our ears will be able to recognize God's words among the innumerable multiplicity of other voices which solicit our attention. We shall find ourselves able to transmit God's word to those around us. Those who are paralyzed with fear will become fully alive again, free men and women under grace who know where to go, what to do, what to say.

This is the fruit of the Presence of the three persons of the Holy Trinity in our hearts.

Given all I have said, you will understand why Jesus, in his ministry, used to make the deaf hear and the dumb speak. This was a manifestation of the coming of the kingdom of God. Christ's healing ministry was a manifestation of God's salvation. Jesus came to bring us grace from the Father.

Let us close our eyes and return to our hearts. Let us be attentive to the divine presence within us. This is the way to fullness of life.