

Reflections

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Are we hypocrites or servants?

Frequently in Holy Scripture, Jesus attacks the Scribes and Pharisees. He invites his own to do and to fulfill what they teach, but not to imitate them in their conduct. He criticizes harshly the spiritual leaders of his people. Concretely, He accuses them of the following:

- they do not practice what they teach
- they impose heavy charges against the people, but they are exempt
- they want to appear before others
- they seek the highest positions and the greetings in public places

One could think that these attitudes were proper to these people and that they had ended with their death. Unfortunately, it is not that way; therefore, the discourse of Jesus is also directed to the Christians of all times. It is directed to the Church authorities and equally directed to each one of us.

This is because the Pharisees are not a category of persons; rather, it is about a category of the spirit, of an interior attitude. It is a bacillus which is always ready to infect our religious life.

We are all Pharisees:

- when we reduce religion to a question of spiritual practices, to a sterile legality
- when we pretend to reach God leaving our neighbor to one side
- when we are concerned more about “appearing” than “being”
- when we consider ourselves better than others

This entire plague has one and only one name: **hypocrisy**. Therefore, in all fairness, being a Pharisee, for us, has become synonymous with hypocrisy.

Hypocrites are “two-faced.” One face is turned toward God and the other face is turned toward others. Undoubtedly, the face turned toward God is horrible, frightening.

For Christ, the law was not an idol, it was a means. He had the task of leading man forward, helping him to grow.

The challenge Jesus now presents to us: love or hypocrisy. Because to love means to serve. Whoever truly loves, serves others, he/she gives himself/herself to the brothers and sisters.

It is the attitude of Christ. His entire life on this earth was nothing other than permanent service to others. In the end, He even surrenders his life for us, to save us and to free us.

It is also the attitude of Mary. At the Annunciation, she proclaims herself the servant of the Lord. Often we believe we are serving God because we say a prayer or fulfill a promise. Let us look at Mary: She gives Him her entire life in order to fulfill the task which God entrusted to her through the message of the angel. Instantly she changes her plans and projects. She completely forgets her own interests.

The same thing happens regarding Elizabeth. She knows her cousin is with child and she leaves immediately in spite of the long journey of almost one hundred kilometers. She does not look for excuses because of being pregnant or because of the long journey. She stays with her for three months until the birth of John the Baptist.

She does all of this because she knows that in the Kingdom of God, the first are those who know how to become the servants of others. When the angel announces to her that She will be the Mother of God, Mary then understands that this vocation requires her to become the first servant of God and of mankind.

Let us ask Jesus and Mary for the gift of that spirit of unselfish and generous service which they have lived in such an exemplary way. Only with that spirit will we be able to face the challenges of the world today. Only with that spirit will we be able to be capable instruments for building a new world.

Questions for reflection

1. Which group do I belong to, hypocrites or servants?
2. How can we serve others?
3. Which attitude of Mary can I adopt?

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