

Commentary on the Gospel for Sat, Sep 3rd 2016

Eduardo Galeano tells the history of a soldier who was serving his military service in an army barracks in Seville. There was a bench in the courtyard of the barracks. A soldier stood guard next to the bench. No one knew why the guard was there, night and day, every night, every day. From generation to generation the officials conveyed the order and the soldiers obeyed. Nobody ever doubted, no one ever asked. And so it was, and always had been; it would be for something.

And so it remained until someone, I do not know which general or colonel, wanted to know the original order. They had to thoroughly search the files. And after much searching, it was learned. Thirty one years, two months and four days ago, they had sent an officer to stand guard next to the bench, which was freshly painted, so that no one would happen to sit on fresh paint (cf. E. Galeano, *El libro de los abrazos*).

This sympathetic story shows us how many times our customs or traditions have a long history that is necessary to know. This is something that happens, with most gravity, when we have a tiny vision about our religious rites. As we read in the Gospel, when Jesus and his disciples jump over a Jewish precept, and they “pick heads of grain, crushing them in their hands for food” (Lk 6, 1), then he is severely interrogated. Everybody supposes that the law and all its rites are immutable. Nobody asks for the meaning of the law, or for the hunger they feel.

Jesus, instead, offers them a good lesson of biblical history, shows them how rigid their religious life is, and gives them some criteria to discern, as these: (1) history teaches us that not all the rites we have sacralised, have always been as they are nowadays, and many of them can be changed; (2) life is always above religious rites; (3) “The Son of Man is Lord and rules over the *sabbath*” (Lk 6, 5).

We haven't answers for all the discussions that appear every week in our Christian magazines (Women's Diaconate, rites of the Mass, priesthood celibacy...), and the same happens with the practical stresses of our daily life, but we have here some lights that can help us, especially with the assurance that Jesus, and the religion, will be for us a freedom's tool.

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