

Rev. Gloria Ulloa's Sermon (English translation)

## **THE SACRED COMES FROM INSIDE OURSELVES**

Biblical text: Luke 11.37-41

At that time, when Jesus finished speaking, a Pharisee invited him to eat at his house. He entered and stood at the table. As the Pharisee was surprised to see that he did not wash his hands before eating, the Lord said to him: "You, the Pharisees, wipe the cup and the dish on the outside, while on the inside you overflow with theft and evil. Fools! who did the outside, didn't he do the inside also? Give alms from the inside, and you will have everything clean. "

Good afternoon dear sisters and dear brothers of the Seattle Presbytery. It is a privilege and great honor to meet here, as part of the delegation of the Presbytery of the Coast in Colombia, South America in this brotherhood exchange. And it is a pleasure to share with this Assembly the Word of God. Receive a greeting and a very loving hug from many people who in our presbytery pray for you, for your projects and the ecclesial mission that you develop.

For more than five years we have been developing a brotherhood that has allowed us to get to know each other better from sharing interests, celebrations of faith and culture, sharing the food, business and crafts that sustain our economies, and knowing our ecclesial educational and social projects. We have visited each other, our Colombian youth have come to participate in "Sound View Camp". Seattle Pacific University students have visited us several times to take Spanish classes and have shared the social work of our churches. All of the above makes us happy.

And the most wonderful thing in this brotherhood is that we share the pains, the worries, the anxieties of daily life. There we have heard your concerns and you have known that as a Colombian people we experience a civil war for more than sixty years of which we are looking to get out and build new ways of living together and know that the current government has not followed that will and a year after to start this government, the criminal gangs that tried to stop the guerrillas, have taken over the lives of ex-combatants and social leaders who protect the waters, the territories, the rivers, the tropical forests, the life of their communities; These facts lead us to understand that the path of Peace is dark, long and very difficult.

We have read a text in our sacred book that mentions some attitudes that reflect the complexity of the human heart, that area that we call conscience, where the task of building ourselves as whole beings open to others takes place. It happens that when that conscience is divided and dissociated - it produces injustice, pride and deceit. A person, a church or a society that lives in legalism, in conventionality,

frequently reproduces and reinforces that logic. Thus rigid stereotypes, and often unfair community structures arise.

In the world of Jesus, the Pharisees represent a sector of Judaism that feels challenged by the message of this Messiah who knows in depth the desires and motivations of human work. It is a sector confronted by its legalism, who are always left open the door of mercy and conversion.

As I said a few minutes ago, some of you who have visited us in Barranquilla, have shared with us the pain caused by the legalistic attitude of some estates of the US society. In Colombia we live and suffer also with that kind of attitude. We debate between the legality or illegality of Venezuelan migration, the illegality or legality of those who have left their weapons and now fight for electoral and democratic participation; the legality of public protest. You here debate between the legality of immigration, the legality of foreign trade and lately they are debating the legality of the government. What is fair? What is legal?

Our conscience is debated. How can we build ourselves as whole beings, open to others who need the solidarity hug, our daily bread, hope of living? Jesus was emphatic, strong in his appreciation of legalistic attitudes and what we call Pharisaic. He also opened the door to conversion by accepting the invitation of the Pharisee, upon entering his house, sitting at his table, and seeks to reach his heart by inviting him to transform himself from within, to be authentic and truthful.

Through this twinning among our Presbyteries, we must challenge ourselves to open our hearts, arms, houses, churches, economic, human, and institutional resources, so that the mission to which Christ has called us is increasingly strengthened as the Sacred common house, the sacred common planet, the sacred common table, the sacred love of our common God who welcomes us with all our qualities and weaknesses. Let us work hand in hand towards this spirituality of welcome, of fraternity, of the love of God that makes us a sacred family. So be it.

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