

What is it That the Lord Asks of Me?

By Franco Maggiotto

Alpignano, Italy – July 2001

"And what doth the Lord require of thee?" Micah 6:8

In the mid-eighth century B. C. the prophet Micah is at work in the kingdom of Judah preaching against the people, who are accused of acting unjustly in the social field. God, says the prophet, has come out of the temple and as He walks amidst the people He comes face to face with the gravity of Israel's daily transgressions. God is angry. He intervenes in people's lives to call everyone to responsibility. He is not a silent, distant God, indifferent to matters human. He has chosen to be with the people to build up a presence of justice and peace amongst all nations. It does not seem that people are worried about God's anger in our times. We use a religious instrument to placate God's wrath: religious observance and sacrificial ritual. The question is . . . what is the sacrifice that is to be made?

The Word of God rejects this attitude to God. It is a mistake to think that God needs religious offerings. It is with one's life that one pleases God, not with religious observance; not with the gift of one's things but with the whole self. Something else is needed and it is only the offering of our whole lives in a new walk of faith. I feel myself very near to the words of the biblical prophet because I believe it is urgent to direct our commitment in the walk of faithfulness to God. What does the Word of God tell us? Jesus has taught that God does not love sacrifices but that He wants love from the men and women of every age. Jesus asks for a life totally committed to love for

that is how we are to be "near to the kingdom of God." God wants something quite different from liturgical ceremonies from us: He wants a practice, a love, a walk.

Above all else He wants justice to be put into effect. It is the action of doing honour to one's sister and brother. It is a matter of expressing welcome to people who have been driven out for being different and branded by every form of evil of our age. It is a matter of restoring true life in peace and well-being. In second place He wants us to love mercy. This sentence could be translated using a repetition of the word 'love.' It is the commitment to love love, to love truly, always, continually because love is the only thinkable and possible act. In third place He wants us to walk humbly with Him. On the one hand the image of walking indicates movement and on the other the name of God indicates the means and the end of this walk. It is a matter of getting moving and shifting ourselves away from well-established situations to acquire humility (a virtue that is little practised) on the path already laid out by God. This is all a practice of sanctification. Only when we follow this path do we discover God's will and meet our brother and sister in such a way that all of ourselves is a reply to what God has already done for our lives and for our future. All this is a journey of peace and consecration to the wish for love that we have received in Jesus.

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