

24. September 2019
Healing of the soul through God - Part 7
„Asceticism as a Guardian of Freedom“

When we now deal with the last sections of this subject, I am aware that there are many other aspects that God offers and for the healing and strengthening of our souls.

With this theme, I wanted to show that as Catholics we know an authentic way in which our soul, wounded by original sin and personal sins, is raised by God. If we follow Him constantly, our souls will heal more and more and be penetrated by God's Spirit.

As I already mentioned in my first meditation on this theme, I did not integrate physical illnesses nor severe psychological damage of the soul. Likewise, the subject of souls who may be under the particular negative influence of demons must be also excluded in this context, because all these very unhealed or sick manifestations require special assistance.

Today I would like to stress the importance of a wise asceticism that strengthens and uprights the soul.

Asceticism means struggle or effort. This means that, with the help of God, I am actively trying to regain control over my impulses and negative inclinations. Above all, it is a strengthening of my will. This becomes easy to understand if we consider a clear example.

Let's say I'm at risk of drinking too much alcohol. I am not talking about an alcohol-related illness, which usually reveals a major mental problem and can lead to alcoholism, but rather the tendency to take more alcohol to me than it is good, i.e. to lose the measure.

If I follow such a negative habit of drinking, then my will is becoming increasingly weakened and I am losing a certain kind of freedom if there is a feast and a offering of alcohol. I want to drink and to feel the associated emotional reactions. And it might happen that I demand this again and again. Although I realize that it is not good for me, the situation will not change for the better if I do not make a clear decision to get in control of this problem. An act of will is needed, which is then carried out with the help of God. The sooner, the better!

However, what is said here about alcohol applies to a great many areas that are less conspicuous. It means all those areas I don't control with my will, to which I somehow surrender who can gain dominance over me.

This is not about concrete sins - but about the loss of the "being the Lord in one's own house", that is, to regulate everything through reason and will with the help of the Lord.

The asceticism now wants to regain this dominion by practicing certain forms of abstinence. In the sense of today's reflections, this does not mean the far-reaching or even total renunciation of all worldly and natural things which, however, may be appropriate in the case of particularly strong ascetic forms of life. But we have to win back the dominance about disorderly desires so that we do not follow the negative inclinations of our human nature.

The healing of the soul through the application of a wise Ascese consists in regaining the freedom of the soul and thus her dignity. Thus heal the deep wounds that were beaten to our soul by the original sin.

The word self-control is associated with the concept of asceticism, and in our reflections connected with the way to follow Christ.

The efforts (ascetics) to regain freedom, however, not only concern an external lack of freedom in our behavior, but also take into account even finer disorderly areas such as : inclinations to talk too much, too long busy with unimportant things, to search for people's attention, being too busy with oneself, having unnecessary discussions, and much more. Basically, it is a question of creating the right spiritual order through our efforts wherever there is spiritual disorder in our lives.

Right asceticism also curbs our thoughts and feelings, it watches over our lives not in the sense of strict and anti-life control, but as guardians of freedom. It recognizes and can be shown by God, where there is still lacking inner freedom in the inner and external order in order to overcome it permanently.

One can easily compare the asceticism with the riding of a horse, so that the horse moves in the direction in which the rider wants to lead it.

Asceticism remains a struggle, an effort until the end of our life, for we will always have to deal with the inclinations of our fallen nature, which are not completely overcome in our earthly existence. But through the real fight we gain greater freedom, even if there are defeats, and thereby also raise ourselves more easily to God.

As a fruit we do not lose ourselves so easily in the things of this world, because we do not allow them to exercise dominion over us. This also applies to the relationship with people. It, too, requires inner freedom, so that negative bonds do not arise and the right ones can go even deeper.

Only God is the Lord, to whom we want to attach with all our hearts unlimited. That is why we take care in asceticism that this dominion of God becomes a reality in us and is not diminished by external and internal lack of freedom.