

23. October 2019

„Sin shall not rule over us“

*Rom 6,12- 18*

*That is why you must not allow sin to reign over your mortal bodies and make you obey their desires; or give any parts of your bodies over to sin to be used as instruments of evil. Instead, give yourselves to God, as people brought to life from the dead, and give every part of your bodies to God to be instruments of uprightness; and then sin will no longer have any power over you -- you are living not under law, but under grace. What is the implication? That we are free to sin, now that we are not under law but under grace? Out of the question! You know well that if you undertake to be somebody's slave and obey him, you are the slave of him you obey: you can be the slave either of sin which leads to death, or of obedience which leads to saving justice. Once you were slaves of sin, but thank God you have given whole-hearted obedience to the pattern of teaching to which you were introduced; and so, being freed from serving sin, you took uprightness as your master.*

We are called to freedom as children of God (*cf. Rom 8,21*). It is important to understand the concept of freedom. There are subordinate freedoms, such as the color you paint your house with and the like.

The real freedom, however, is the ability of us human beings to do the right thing. For us Christians, doing the right thing means fulfilling the will of God.

Today Saint Paul reminds us of what stands in the way of fulfilling God's will: it is sin! Sin, as we know, is the rebellion against God's will, which unfortunately reigns in our mortal body. That is why it is important first of all that we fight sin with the power of the Spirit of God. It is important to take a very firm approach here, for sin can never be trivialized in its destructive dimension. We know our inclinations to sin, and that is why it is important not only to avoid sin concretely, but also to work on the evil inclinations of our hearts.

However, this is a long-term task, because sin has entered into our hearts. We need perseverance and the grace of God's forgiveness again and again, so that we can rein over our bad inclinations and defeat them with the grace of God. Spiritual teachers

tell us that this struggle lasts until the end of life! But it is important that we really fight.

For example, we notice envy in our hearts and see that this feeling occurs when we have the impression that other people enjoy an advantage in comparison to us. This envy can relate to both: to material and spiritual things.

The first step is to regret the discovered envy in me. This rejection of envy comes from the realization that envy is evil, does not correspond to the will of God, that it distorts our being and is generally regarded as a characteristic of the devil:

*But through the envy of the devil, death came into the world, and all who belong to him experience it (Wis 2:24).*

It may be very helpful to become even more aware of the nature of envy and to notice clearly the burdened situations that arises as a result of envy towards one's neighbour. Instead of looking at him through the eyes of God and gratefully seeing his virtues as a gift from God, we mistreat him and are hardly able to see anything good in the other one. The heart is darkened and we are bound to ourselves!

This darkness of the heart and self-centeredness must now be carried persistently in prayer to God; to ask the Holy Spirit to touch with his light and love my darkness.

Then I should try to thank the Lord for the good things of the other, even against my feelings. This is not an easy task, because envy as a bad force, filling my feelings negatively, will not allow this and perhaps also convince me that I might see the things in the right way.

It is important for us to hold firm the word of Saint Paul: sin shall not rule over us, either in relation to our sensual temptations or to our spiritual temptations.

The word "ruling" means that a change of power must occur, and this is connected with a persevering struggle. Our hearts and our sensual inclinations should come under the permanent influence of grace, and with the participation of our will, the change of power can take place and we are following the right path. Uprightness is our master!