

14. December 2019

“The song of praise for Elijah”

*Sir 48,1-4,9-11*

*Then the prophet Elijah arose like a fire, his word flaring like a torch. It was he who brought famine on them and decimated them in his zeal. By the word of the Lord he shut up the heavens, three times also he brought down fire. How glorious you were in your miracles, Elijah! Has anyone reason to boast as you have? Taken up in the whirlwind of fire, in a chariot with fiery horses; designated in the prophecies of doom to allay God's wrath before the fury breaks, to turn the hearts of fathers towards their children, and to restore the tribes of Jacob. Blessed, those who will see you, and those who have fallen asleep in love; for we too shall certainly have life.*

There is the song of praise of Elijah, whom God has given to the people of Israel! Even though the message of the prophets often acts as a threat to those who hear it and walk other ways, their call to repentance, with the frequent threat of the consequences of evil doings, is in fact an act of God's goodness! What responsibility it is if one sees that a person draws misfortune through wrong ways and one does not warn him!

Elijah fulfilled his mission and proclaimed the truth! But today's text, in the context of this reading, laments that, in spite of the full power of the Prophet, the people did not convert themselves! What tragedy and what deep gaze into the abyss of the human soul!

Again and again, the question arises: Why do people go on a wrong path, even though they get warnings and are taught not only by the words of the prophets, but certainly also get in their personal environment or in the depths of their soul corresponding clues?

Here we encounter an almost inexplicable abyss of human closeness. Living in sin robs man freedom and makes him a slave to sin! In this state, he follows the laws of sin and thus gets deeper and deeper into the sphere of power of the "prince of this world"! The mind, which has already been affected by original sin, is further darkened, the will is weakened even more, the supernatural light of God no longer penetrates the soul! Various forms of pride permeate the soul and make her dull

and resistant to the warning voices of the prophets! Similar things, even if not burdened with the full weight of guilt, applies to the error that blinds the mind!

It is a nearly a hopeless point to explain why man does not abandon his wrong ways! If it were not for the patience and mercy of God, which never ceases to woo the bewildered man, then the further proclamation to those who do not listen would be futile from our human perspective!

However, when our options are exhausted and we no longer see a way to reach the people we are concerned about, prayer and trust in God is still a key that God can use! He still knows ways to the hearts of the people, we do not know and it is his love that does not rest in finding the people and embracing them in his fatherly love!

Even the apostate King Ahab from the Book of Kings has made acts of penance (*cf. 1Kgs 21,27-29*). We know from the biblical accounts the conversion of the city of Nineveh (*cf. Jn 3,5-10*), and hear again and again in our days of amazing conversions! People recognize - perhaps late and sometimes through great distress - in the grace of God the right way and leave their confused and sinful ways! Also from Judah, it says in the reading, remained a small remnant, and some did what is right! So thank God there are examples of repentance, and they are real miracles! Therefore, we must never stop our efforts to participate in the conversion of other people, even if it seems hopeless!

Today, at a time when the anti-Christian spirit is manifesting itself more and more conspicuously in the world and has also entered into the Church, it takes for us Christians the courage of the prophets to bear witness to the truth fearlessly, even if we do not see any fruits and the power of darkness acts as if it could control everything!

We must overcome the indifference with the perseverance and firmness of the faith; to fight against discouragement with being anchored in the divine virtue of hope; enmity, with supernatural love; the fear of man, with the spirit of strength! The Prophet Elijah is encouraging us to fulfil the mission entrusted to us by the grace of God and to remain faithful to God in difficult times of persecution!