

15. January 2020

“Prayer and solitude”

*Mk 1, 29- 39*

*And at once on leaving the synagogue, he went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed and feverish, and at once they told him about her. He went in to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were sick with diseases of one kind or another; he also drove out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the message there too, because that is why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out devils.*

The solitude and the prayer in the early morning, when the night is ending, are presented to us today by Jesus! When these two moments come together, then one can usually learn to understand God much more easily and also in a different way!

The virginity of the morning and the silence are among the most beautiful moments of intimate life with God! In order to cultivate this intimacy of relationship with his heavenly Father, the Lord withdraws, only to then again respond to the call to bring the Gospel to the people! In this way he gives a clear example to all those who have a call to evangelization, in one way or another!

First of all, it is a matter of seeking God in prayer. Whoever can, be advised to try it in the early hours of the morning, when the world has not yet taken its full course! The inner dialogue with the Father, the receptivity to the Holy Spirit, the inner strengthening and consolation through His presence and especially the light we need, to pass on the Gospel in His Spirit, all this we receive more in silence than in the noise that surrounds us!

Some spiritual fathers speak of an inner cell that is formed through prayer within the person! One can think of it as a kind of hidden "monk's cell", where one can

retreat even in the hustle and bustle of this world, to dialogue with God! Very helpful is the "prayer of the heart", so that this "inner cell" can be formed!

To remember: it is known from the tradition of the eastern monks! The classical form is: "Lord Jesus Christ, Son of God, have mercy on me". This prayer is often repeated inwardly and when the soul has become accustomed to it, this inner space of the soul is formed and the heart yearns to be in this intimate space with God!

In the book *"The Power of Silence"* by Cardinal Sarah, we can read these words of Fr. Augustine Guillerand: *"What people possess within themselves they will not find anywhere else! If silence does not live in man, and if solitude is not a state in which man can be formed, the creature lives without God! There is no place in the world where God is more present than in the heart of man. This heart is truly the dwelling place of God, a temple of silence!"*

By the way, Cardinal Sarah, in the same book, points out that silence can be maintained even in the turmoil of the world, and that is comforting!

But the example of the Lord remains, which invites us to imitate him, to seek prayer and solitude in order to deepen our intimate relationship with him and so to be fruitful for the kingdom of God!