

19. July 2020

“God's strength”

Wis 12,13.16-19

For there is no God, other than you, who cares for every one, to whom you have to prove that your sentences have been just. For your strength is the basis of your saving justice, and your sovereignty over all makes you lenient to all. You show your strength when people will not believe in your absolute power, and you confound any insolence in those who do know it. But you, controlling your strength, are mild in judgement, and govern us with great lenience, for you have only to will, and your power is there. By acting thus, you have taught your people that the upright must be kindly to his fellows, and you have given your children the good hope that after sins you will grant repentance.

The text gives us an understanding of the way of God.

God's omnipotence does not show itself in arbitrariness or in the demonstration of external power, as we so often have to experience with dictators, but in the fact that the Lord is mild and lenient.

We human beings are called to become like the Lord, because we are created in His image! Thus the text suggests to us that the righteous man must be kind to humanity, that is, those qualities of leniency and gentleness become effective in our lives which the text attributes to God!

But how is this to happen, since the text tells us that God's dominion over everything makes him forbear, since we do not possess the omnipotence of God and his strength?

If we look into the right relationship between God and the one who serves and is faithful to Him, we discover that God allows man to share in His omnipotence. Let us remember how Jesus enables his disciples to cast out demons, heal diseases, raise the dead and much more in his name (*cf. Mt 10,8*), which the Lord did during his earthly life. Or think of the authority that Jesus gives his priests to transform bread and wine into the body and blood of Christ in the Holy Sacrifice. Also the legitimate exercise of authority in the name of God is in a special way of the participation in the omnipotence of God.

Seen from this perspective, it becomes clear that from God's side there is no isolated reign which only commands and imposes its will far from man, but that God's reign is a reign of love which calls man into the mystery of love and offers him a share in the fullness of God!

Now, through the people who listen to God and serve Him, His reign is to be realized in the same spirit.

In the discipleship of the Lord, which should make us similar to him, God gives us his Holy Spirit. It is He who makes us similar to the Lord, if He can establish His mild dominion in us. The more the Holy Spirit works in us, the more the fruits of the Spirit become visible. Gentleness belongs to them!

Gentleness is the way of the Lord. *"Blessed are the gentle: they shall have the earth as inheritance."* (Mt 5,4)

One does not achieve one's goals by brute force. The ability to let things grow and mature and to overcome resistance with patience grows. Gentleness knows about the weakness of man, to be able to fall back on himself again and again, and tries to give him support, to lift him up and to give him a new chance again and again.

In the description of this gentleness we recognize that this is the way of God, how he deals with the sinner, always opens the ways to conversion for him, can wait for him with great patience. This is a sign of true strength.

But this is not to be confused with a false indulgence which trivializes the seriousness of sin and which, under certain circumstances, adapts itself to the wishes of man. We hear in the above passage that God punishes defiant rebellion. Where we resist God through sin and rebel against him, mildness and indulgence would not be the help to repent. Here man needs clear instruction and must also feel the consequences of the wrong attitude.

But also the rebuke or punishment by God springs from the same source of love that wants to lead man to his salvation.

It should be the same with us, when we strive for people! We must, like the Lord, have our eyes on his eternal salvation and give help in the Spirit of the Lord so that he can reach the goal!