

20. September 2020

**“To live for the glory of God”**

*Phil 1,20-24.27*

*All in accordance with my most confident hope and trust that I shall never have to admit defeat, but with complete fearlessness I shall go on, so that now, as always, Christ will be glorified in my body, whether by my life or my death. Life to me, of course, is Christ, but then death would be a positive gain. On the other hand again, if to be alive in the body gives me an opportunity for fruitful work, I do not know which I should choose. I am caught in this dilemma: I want to be gone and to be with Christ, and this is by far the stronger desire- and yet for your sake to stay alive in this body is a more urgent need. But you must always behave in a way that is worthy of the gospel of Christ, so that whether I come to you and see for myself or whether I only hear all about you from a distance, I shall find that you are standing firm and united in spirit, battling, as a team with a single aim, for the faith of the gospel.*

God's glorification! This is what Paul wants to live for, and in doing so he realises Christ's deep desire to glorify the Father in heaven.

In a small booklet written by Madre Eugenia Ravasio and positively examined by the Church (“The Father speaks to his children”, 1932), it says:

*“If people were able to look into the heart of Jesus and see his glory and deepest longings, they would know that his most burning desire is to glorify the Father, the One who sent him. They would understand that he desires above all the fullness of the glorification of the Father, as is only possible for man, and as man owes it to me, his Father and Creator, and even more - the Author of his Redemption.”*

This view is also very essential for us. Does what we do serve to glorify the Father? Are our deeds, our thoughts and our words directed to the Lord, and are we jealous of giving glory to Him and not seeking it for us?

It is helpful to ask these questions because they lead us away from our own self and put us before God. We need not fear these questions, but they can wake us up and lead us in the right direction. In this way we come close to the Lord and also to his faithful servant Paul, who had the glory of God in view in all that they did.

In today's text, the apostle to the nations speaks of death, which he longs for in order to be completely with Christ. After this life in the service of God, which has taken up all his energies, he wants to come home to heaven. But he sees that the young community still needs him and so he puts aside his desire for eternity to serve his own!

This attitude of the apostle shows how much his life has already gone away from his own interests. The desire to be united with the Lord as soon as possible comes deep from his heart. There is nothing that still holds him personally in this world. All his earthly desires have come to rest and he has fought the good fight of faith (*cf. 2Tim 4,7*)! Why should he stay here when the glory of God is waiting for him? But - and this shows both his love for the still young church and his detachment from himself - he can still be fruitful on earth if he remains! This may glorify God even more, and for the sake of this glorification, one may even put aside the desire to be soon completely united in heaven with the Lord.

This detachment from ourselves, which can be more easily achieved with a view to the glory of the Lord, is also necessary for our spiritual life. St. Nicholas of Flue, the national saint of Switzerland, summarised the classical spiritual path in a very beautiful prayer:

*My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from you.*

*My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to you.*

*My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to you.*

It is above all the last part of the prayer which can be seen in today's text. To serve the Lord selflessly and have only His glory before our eyes is a high goal. Jesus put it before our eyes in perfection on Golgotha and with his crucifixion, and we also see it in the apostle Paul in today's text.

The above prayer shows us the way to get there. The love for the Lord, which we may ask for, gives us the strength to free ourselves from everything that hinders this love from fully unfolding. The Lord will not fail to hear the request to the Lord to give us all that makes our love grow. By looking at the glory of God and in service to our neighbour, by working on our own hearts and by carefully fulfilling the tasks given to us in this world, we will then be able to do what the prayer says at the end: we will become detached from ourselves and become entirely the property of the Lord!