

**3. September 2020**

**“Not to live in self-delusion”**

*1 Cor 3,18 -21*

*There is no room for self-delusion. Any one of you who thinks he is wise by worldly standards must learn to be a fool in order to be really wise. For the wisdom of the world is folly to God. As scripture says: He traps the crafty in the snare of their own cunning and again: The Lord knows the plans of the wise and how insipid they are. So there is to be no boasting about human beings: everything belongs to you, whether it is Paul, or Apollos, or Cephas, the world, life or death, the present or the future - all belong to you; but you belong to Christ and Christ belongs to God.*

At the very beginning of this short passage, Saint Paul uses a significant word, for he begins his reflections by pointing out that one should not live in self-delusion. This is a very important theme for the spiritual journey.

Those who consider themselves wise or prudent and thus feel superior to other people are trapped in illusions about themselves and have become a victim of self-conceit, a form of self-exaltation! They are in danger of becoming intoxicated by their thoughts and they think the more complicated (which they often mistake for differentiated) they are able to express themselves, the wiser they think they are! With their apparent wisdom, they build up an illusory value of themselves and think they will discover their greatness in it!

What great self-deception and you can even succumb to it all your life!

However, self-deception does not only exist in this area, it is an evil to which not a few people succumb! This touches on the often mentioned topic of self-knowledge, the humble perception of one's own guilt, faults and limitations before a loving and merciful God!

Especially the emphasis on the loving and merciful God is important in this context! For not infrequently a false, distorted or even incomplete picture of God still exists, so that man does not dare to open himself up in all his depths, to perceive his shadows and to carry them to God!

Instead, he is in danger of repressing the shadows and of living in an image as he might want to be and as he imagines it to be! But this causes something artificial in his being and he lives in a form of self-deception! This can become very entrenched and if one does not find the way out, a healthy realism and therefore a healthy self-assessment is missing! It is easy to see that one can hardly assess other people correctly and tends to idealise them or even to let them down and condemn them if they do not correspond to the ideal of our illusion.

However, self-deception of all kinds can be dissolved by the work of the Holy Spirit and we can ask God to learn to perceive us in his light! Especially the invitation to approach God without fear and self-disguise is a way out of self-delusion and thus also an opening to overcome illusions about us.

We gain true wisdom when we learn to see everything in the perspective of God, to receive everything from Him, to idealise neither ourselves nor others, when we dare to simply be a child of God and understand this world and ourselves in the light of Him!

I would like to point out here the help of the Holy Spirit, because it may well be that our first reaction is: "I do not know whether I am living in self-deception." Perhaps we are even frightened by the thought that this might be the case.

The Holy Scripture says: "*But who can detect his own failings?*" (Ps 19,12) So we are often blind to ourselves. But the Holy Spirit knows us, and He will lead us out of any illusion about ourselves with infinite patience if we ask Him and allow Him to do so. Bit by bit he will remove false images of ourselves until we come closer and closer to what the Lord intended us to be. This means a great freedom, because we will recognise deeper that all the good in us comes from God.