

30. September 2020

“Trust to God will help to overcome sufferings”

Job 9:1-12,14-16

Job spoke next. He said: Indeed, I know it is as you say: how could anyone claim to be upright before God? Anyone trying to argue matters with him, could not give him one answer in a thousand. Among the wisest and the hardest, who then can successfully defy him? He moves the mountains, though they do not know it; he throws them down when he is angry. He shakes the earth, and moves it from its place, making all its pillars tremble. The sun, at his command, forbears to rise, and on the stars he sets a seal. He and no other has stretched out the heavens and trampled on the back of the Sea. He has made the Bear and Orion, the Pleiades and the Mansions of the South. The works he does are great and unfathomable, and his marvels cannot be counted. If he passes me, I do not see him; he slips by, imperceptible to me. If he snatches his prey, who is going to stop him or dare to ask, 'What are you doing?' And here am I, proposing to defend myself and select my arguments against him! Even if I am upright, what point is there in answering him? I can only plead for mercy with my judge! And if he deigned to answer my citation, I cannot believe he would listen to what I said.

The text is preceded by Job's lamentations about the misfortune that has befallen him, and various advice and opinions he has received to interpret what has struck him!

Perhaps we can understand today's text in such a way that Job, in this painful situation, wants to put himself in the right relationship with God, because the intensity of the misfortune that has struck him needs inner processing! It may well happen that we are rebelling in the face of great suffering and have to overcome this rebellion in an inner struggle!

Job chooses the way to emphasize the greatness and inviolable sovereignty of God, before whom every rebellion is pointless and unjustified! Faced with this inviolable greatness of the Lord, even the suffering creature must remain silent and submit to his situation! God's wisdom is so comprehensive that any attempt to "do right" with God seems pointless!

An attitude comes to light here which could easily be misunderstood as a kind of "capitulation" to God's omnipotence and would thus lead in a certain way to fatalism! However, this is not a liberating insight to which one should be ready to submit, but rather describes a kind of surrender to superior forces, to which nothing could be done to counteract!

That is certainly not the way we should carry heavy crosses, and it is certainly not the intention of the text!

But how can we deal with severe blows of fate that threaten our material or even our mental existence and which we cannot understand?

A first direction of advice can be found in today's text: Even if it may not be easy, we must not fall into a kind of "self-cramp" because of the difficulties! We must therefore raise our eyes to God and enter into a conversation with him about the suffering that has struck us! Such a conversation allows us to speak frankly to our Lord, to lament our suffering and perhaps also to express our incomprehension as to why the suffering may have hit us! The conversation with God opens our soul to Him and God can speak to us in His own way! In addition, our soul does not complain additionally by spreading depressing feelings and darkening our soul. We can always -like the Lord Himself in Gethsemane (*cf. Mt 26:39.42.44*)- ask for the cross to be taken from us!

The next step is to activate and strengthen our trust in God! Especially difficult situations invite us to do this because they demand a spiritual act from us, because we will not gain this trust through the level of feeling! We want to trust, we trust according to our knowledge of faith, we trust because God loves us! In these acts of trust, we make sure in God that he has everything in his hands, that he knows our personal and family situation and that he knows how to turn everything around for the good! This also applies to the difficult situations in the world and in the Church which could lead to hopelessness!

This trust is rooted not only in the omnipotence and greatness of God, as presented to us in today's text, but also in the power of his love, which makes even the most difficult situations that we have to suffer part of the basic intention of God's love! When we have taken these two essential steps through prayer, then the possibility of accepting the cross that has entered our lives opens up more easily! This acceptance can be without knowledge, but our heart will hold on to God in spite of all the suffering that befalls us, and will know in our innermost being that God in

his wisdom also takes this suffering into service. We learn to accept it step by step, to live with it and to grow from it!