

21. October 2020

“The mystery of God has been revealed”

Eph 3:2-12

You have surely heard the way in which God entrusted me with the grace he gave me for your sake; he made known to me by a revelation the mystery I have just described briefly- a reading of it will enable you to perceive my understanding of the mystery of Christ. This mystery, as it is now revealed in the Spirit to his holy apostles and prophets, was unknown to humanity in previous generations: that the gentiles now have the same inheritance and form the same Body and enjoy the same promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. I have been made the servant of that gospel by a gift of grace from God who gave it to me by the workings of his power. I, who am less than the least of all God's holy people, have been entrusted with this special grace, of proclaiming to the gentiles the unfathomable treasure of Christ and of throwing light on the inner workings of the mystery kept hidden through all the ages in God, the Creator of everything. The purpose of this was, that now, through the Church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided God's wisdom is, according to the plan which he had formed from all eternity in Christ Jesus our Lord. In him we are bold enough to approach God in complete confidence, through our faith in him.

The mystery of God, which was hidden in God from eternity, has been revealed, as the present text tells us. The Gospel brings us this light and the Apostle Paul is called in a special way to proclaim this mystery, which has now become reality, to the Gentiles.

Whereas in the days of the Old Covenant the people of Israel were strictly separated from the Gentiles, so that they would not be defiled by pagan idols, be confused and possibly fall into "false brotherhood", the Gospel now invites the Gentiles to be heirs and to belong to the same body, the Church, which was made visible by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

It is important to realise that this knowledge of the ways of God is not one which has matured through human reflection, but one which has been revealed. God himself has thus directly communicated it, entrusting it in a special way to St Paul, “the least of all God's holy people”, as he says of himself. He becomes - as we all know from Scripture - through a vision of Christ (*cf. Acts 9,1-8*), from persecutor

of Christians to preacher of the Gospel. His conversion is so significant that the Church has rightly established a special celebration for it, for his service in proclaiming the Gospel and building up the young Church is immense.

A revelation has a different quality than myths, human knowledge and wisdom, than fairy tales and dreams of all kinds, than traces of divine seeds in other religions and natural knowledge of God. It is a self-revelation of God and thus becomes a sacred obligation for people who want to serve God, an incontrovertible truth from which they cannot and will not escape. That is why the apostle speaks in another passage of a “compulsion” that lies upon him (*cf. 1Cor 9:16*). It is a compulsion that grows from the knowledge of God, a compulsion to serve love and truth, a “holy compulsion” so to speak, and thus a great grace. The apostle is aware of this.

This mystery of God through the proclamation of the Gospel, which has now been revealed and has led to conversion of those who believe and confess, is now entrusted to all believers. They also enter into the “sacred obligation” of proclaiming and witnessing through a life of conversion. In this way they comply with the first commandment to love God above all else and also with the commandment to love one's neighbour to bring them the most important: the message of Christ. This message is above the works of corporal mercy, but it is a message that will last for time and for eternity.

It is essential to maintain the primacy of proclamation and not to give such prominence to the corporal works of mercy that the decisive dimension of man's life - namely, God's revelation through the Gospel - is very little communicated to men or even withheld from humanity.

Here we can listen to the vigilance that the Gospel of today calls for and set in relation to the proclamation of the Gospel: *“If the householder had known at what time the burglar would come, he would not have let anyone break through the wall of his house.” (Lk 12:39)*

If, for example we would look to other religions as the same value and truth as the gospel the thief would be already in the house to weaken the uniqueness of the divine revelation and to distract from the most essential in many ways. The last words of the Gospel of today are: *“When someone is given a great deal, a great deal will be demanded of that person; when someone is entrusted with a great deal, of that person even more will be expected.” (Lk 12:48)*

God's revelation is entrusted to the Church, which is to watch over it and serve it, and thus to each one of the faithful, according to the measure which has been given to him. To submit to and serve this task which the Lord has entrusted to us is true humility. We do not proclaim our ideas, wishes, visions and dreams, but what God has planned for the salvation of mankind, so that *“through the Church, the principalities and ruling forces should learn how many-sided God's wisdom is”*.