



Balta Lelija

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“Only the Son Makes You Free” (Part 7)

Spiritual view of vanity

If one now looks with a spiritual view of people, who are strongly determined by vanity, one quickly perceives the specific non-freedom of these people. They are not oriented towards God, but towards themselves, and also make themselves easily dependent on the judgment of other people.

St. Paul was obviously also aware of this problem in the new Christian communities, and he therefore gives Christian women the following premise:

"Likewise, women should decorate themselves in appropriate posture, with modesty and restraint, not with braids of hair and gold or pearl jewelry or precious clothing, but as it should be for women who want to be God-fearing - through good works!" (1Tim 2,9-10)

We notice how the Apostle directs the gaze from external beauty to the inner beauty of man and thus directs the concentration to God.

God looks at man differently, and before him another beauty becomes essential: the God-connected man, in which the beauty of God himself shines.

In this way, a new space of freedom and clarity is created: it is not the external beauty that has any merit - to which one has done nothing - but man, who participates in the development of his inner beauty in the grace of God, comes into view. He can free himself from the cramped effort to please himself and others externally, and therefore a different depth of being opens up.

The physically beauty enters the periphery from its artificial center and is arranged there. It will no longer be a source of preference. This is the place where a new equality with other people takes place, for now other values that are not determined by external circumstances but by the realization of virtues count.

Vanity and radical succession of Christ

An even stronger cut happens when Christian women do not live in marriage or even enter into a form of life entirely oriented towards God. Here we can record in the background the words of the Apostle, who sets the new basic orientation. Thus he writes to the congregation of Corinth:

"... the unmarried woman and the virgin are concerned about the cause of the Lord: they want to be holy in body and spirit: the married woman, on the other hand, is concerned about the things of the world and wants to please her husband." (1Cor 7,32)

When we accept and realize this word, it becomes clear that a vanity that wants to please itself and man, in order to seemingly increase one's own value, is not to connect with a call to the close succession of Christ. A vain nun would be a contradiction in himself. Precisely the call to the radical succession of the Lord cannot tolerate vanity being practised, for one has heard the call: *"Daughter, look and tilt your ear. Leave your people and your father's house. The king demands your beauty. Bow to him."* (Ps 45,11-12)

If one does not seriously try to overcome the "old vanities", one remains a prisoner of oneself, which is all the more painful since a high vocation has been given to the follow Christ. There remains a self-boundity that cannot harmonize with the way of being dependent from the things of this world and the false attachment to itself and to persons. The vanity can become an infidelity to the call of the Lord! At the latest now it becomes clear - especially with a pronounced vanity - that it is not only a harmless stupidity, but that it weakens man from within and he cannot overcome this world with his thinking and feeling.

Consequences of vanity and overcoming

Vanity binds man to the periphery. From the spiritual point of view, this means that one remains in "voluntary imperfections" and therefore the soul cannot take an upswing to God. Vanity becomes a chain that binds, and becomes a serious obstacle to inner progress on the spiritual path. This can go as far as an indifference to the requests of the inner path, because longer-lasting voluntary attachments not only hinder spiritual progress, but also burden the soul, rob it of the inner dynamics and makes them dull!

As with all other topics that touch on non-freedom, it is important to overcome self-boundness. Only the attachment to the Son of God and all that He makes us understand in His Word really frees us. A different order of values arises, which the Lord opens up to us. When we turn to it, we leave the old order of values and attachment to them. The external step may be relatively simple, overcoming the inner bonds and lack of freedom requires a longer consistent path.

Whatever good gifts we have, they are always given. Even if we helped them to unfold, we could not do so without the Lord. That is why it is a kind of blindness if we want to possess it for ourselves in order to apply something before us and other people. To understand this and to work consistently to overcome vanity will give us a freedom that will breathe a relief to our souls and lead us out of inner captivity.