

11. February 2020

“The reverence”

1 Kgs 8,22- 23.27-30

Then, in the presence of the whole assembly of Israel, Solomon stood facing the altar of Yahweh and, stretching out his hands towards heaven, said, 'Yahweh, God of Israel, there is no god like you in heaven above or on earth beneath, as loyal to the covenant and faithful in love to your servants as long as they walk wholeheartedly in your way. Yet will God really live with human beings on earth? Why, the heavens, the highest of the heavens, cannot contain you. How much less this temple built by me! Even so, listen favourably to the prayer and entreaty of your servant, Yahweh my God; listen to the cry and to the prayer which your servant makes to you today: day and night may your eyes watch over this temple, over this place of which you have said, "My name will be there." Listen to the prayer which your servant offers in this place. 'Listen to the entreaty of your servant and of your people Israel; whenever they pray in this place, listen from the place where you reside in heaven; and when you hear, forgive.

In this prayer of Solomon, we feel his great devotion to God and his humility. He, as king of Israel, calls himself a servant of God. This is a term that we do not choose so easily today when we speak to God, just as we would seldom call ourselves servants of the Lord, as our Lady did when the Archangel Gabriel spoke to her.

But it is important that we understand what the attitude reflected in these terms is, so that we can learn and imitate it. We must never forget that the Bible has also been written for our instruction. Therefore, we should always try to draw spiritual benefit from what we read in it.

I think we can notice a deep reverence, both in the behaviour of the King and in the attitude of the Virgin. They are aware of the greatness of God, and they know what it means for that infinite God to bow down to his creature. We think also of the angels and saints who prostrate themselves before God, who are allowed to see Him and are thus fully aware of His greatness.

Respect for God and man is a basic attitude that must not be violated without causing great harm to the soul! It reflects the reality of being created by God. A

person who shows no reverence towards God is fundamentally wrong. And also the man who neglects respect before people fails. Love and reverence are not mutually exclusive, but two essential components of life that belong together!

The reverence for God protects us from false confidentiality and leads us to a life of mindfulness. This mindfulness is first of all directed to the will of God as we can recognize it, and to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. Then it extends to all areas of life and to other people. Everything that God has created is originally good and we have to treat it with respect, especially if it is a person.

The prayer that King Solomon performs before the whole people is exemplary! In it, the greatness of God is praised and, moreover, Solomon gives an example to all. By calling himself a "servant of the Lord", he makes it clear that in everything he does he attains his greatness only from God, that he does not stand before God by virtue of his own greatness, but that he is the one to whom the Lord has undeservedly turned his favor. All he does is to do his duty! Thus Solomon corresponds to the relationship of the creature to the Creator; to the relationship of the servant to his master, who obeys him without expecting any greater reward.

This attitude is also important for us! If we render a service, we are simply doing our duty, and so there is no need to emphasize it too much. But it is God who exalts this service and rewards us with Himself.

For the Mother of the Lord it was natural to do the will of God. By calling herself "servant of the Lord", she was saying: "I am at your disposal, great and beloved God!" And, without a doubt, there was nothing more beautiful and important for her than to fulfil the will of her beloved Father and to become completely one with Him in love!

Are we aware of what it means to be invited into the house of the Lord for the Feast of the Lamb? What holy reverence should seize us, especially when we realize that it is the unbloody actualization of Christ's sacrifice that takes place, and not simply an encounter with the community! Is there not silence and supreme reverence for the presence of God in the Sacrament of the Altar necessary? Should this not also be expressed in gestures and attitudes of reverence and in the effort to leave behind all worldly concerns?

Is it not high time to regain more reverence in our holy Church and to take care that our temples do not become places of useless distraction or even be used for events that do not correspond to the dignity of the place of worship?

Solomon would certainly be on our side, and Our Lady no less!