

15. February 2020

“All is given by God”

*1 Kgs 22, 26-32, 33-34*

*In those days, Jeroboam thought to himself, 'As things are, the kingdom will revert to the House of David. If this people continues to go up to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, the people's heart will turn back again to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will put me to death.' So the king thought this over and then made two golden calves; he said to the people, 'You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt!' He set one up at Bethel, and the people went in procession in front of the other one all the way to Dan. In Israel this gave rise to sin, for the people went to Bethel to worship the one, and all the way to Dan to worship the other. He set up shrines on the high places and appointed priests from ordinary families, who were not of levitical descent. Jeroboam also instituted a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth of the month, like the feast kept in Judah, when he offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did at Bethel, offering sacrifices to the calves which he had made and, at Bethel, installing the priests of the high places which he had set up. Jeroboam did not give up his wicked ways after this incident, but went on appointing priests for the high places from the common people. He consecrated as priests of the high places any who wished to be. Such conduct made the House of Jeroboam a sinful House, and caused its ruin and extinction from the face of the earth.*

Today's reading presents us with an abuse of religion for political matters; or, rather, for one's own ambition for power. This is a more than evil thing, because what is most sacred is being abused for one's own interests. So it is not only a spiritual confusion of the person, but an elementary fraud against God and the believing people. And this is evidently happening with a more or less clear consciousness.

How can one get so far away from God?

In the story of Solomon, we heard that it was the seduction of his women that made him fall into idolatry. Evidently, his weakness towards the beauty and eroticism of women became his downfall. This is reminiscent of the sin of his father David, who deeply repented before God and was forgiven by him.

In Jeroboam's case, we see the fear of losing power, as well as the fear of losing his own life. The combination of these two elements constitutes a lethal danger!

The seduction of power lives deep within man, and connects him spiritually with the rebellion of Lucifer against God. Obviously, the power seems to convey something like own greatness and quasi "divinity" to the human being. One gets intoxicated with power and it puts man into an unreal existence, consisting of the belief that, by virtue of his own power, one could do practically everything, without being accountable to God and, in some way, to people as well.

Lucifer did not want to serve, but wanted to have the power of God Himself. So it has something to do with a delusion, in which one enters a sick world, the product of one's own illusions, which greatly exalt the own person.

In Jeroboam's case, there is not only the fear of losing power; but, in the loss of power, he sees his own life threatened. This makes his actions even more thoughtless and blind to the reality of God. Thus Jeroboam becomes a seducer of the Israelites, and even institutes as priests all those who wish to do so, thereby perverting this noble ministry.

The result: the house of Jeroboam was destroyed because of sin. It is sad to hear that no one stood up against him and that the priests followed his instructions to worship idols.

So far the biblical report...

Even more tragic than weakness is pride, and the ambition for power that results from it! It is easier for a person to become aware of his weakness - sometimes shamefully - than to realize his striving for power and prestige. To want to be great for oneself is a tremendous evil! This does not always have to take the extreme forms as in the story of Jeroboam, but can be very finely settled in the heart of the people.

The Lord has given us the remedy to this evil in His person and in His Word: true dominion, as it is pleasing before God and as God Himself exercises it, is service out of love. For us human beings, this means taking responsibility for every moment of our life before God.

Here it is necessary to be very attentive to ourselves, asking the Lord to overcome in our hearts all striving for power and pride, so that no flattery, whether from the

outside or the inside, can corrupt us. The daily interiorization that everything is given to us by God and the humble recognition of our own limitations, make us realistic, thus freeing us from the delusion of our supposed greatness. How beautiful were the words we heard some days ago in the testimony of Roy Schoeman, when the Virgin Mary, as he was in ecstasy before her beauty, said to him: "You do not understand anything! I am nothing. I am a creature. He is everything!"

Looking at and imitating Mary is a remedy for "Jeroboam's sickness". Instead of seeking one's own greatness and not wanting to serve, like Lucifer, Our Lady says, "*Behold, I am the handmaiden of the Lord. It shall be done unto me according to thy word.*" (Lk 1,38); and further on: "*My soul magnifies the greatness of the Lord... on the lowliness of his handmaiden he looked upon*" (v. 46.48).

This is the answer to all manner of egoism, Luciferian power and all forms of self-indulgence!