

27. February 2020

“To choose life is to choose God”

Deut 30,15-20

“Look, today I am offering you life and prosperity, death and disaster. If you obey the commandments of Yahweh your God, which I am laying down for you today, if you love Yahweh your God and follow his ways, if you keep his commandments, his laws and his customs, you will live and grow numerous, and Yahweh your God will bless you in the country which you are about to enter and make your own. But if your heart turns away, if you refuse to listen, if you let yourself be drawn into worshipping other gods and serving them, I tell you today, you will most certainly perish; you will not live for long in the country which you are crossing the Jordan to enter and possess. Today, I call heaven and earth to witness against you: I am offering you life or death, blessing or curse. Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, holding fast to him; for in this your life consists, and on this depends the length of time that you stay in the country which Yahweh swore to your ancestors Abraham, Isaac and Jacob that he would give them.”

To choose the commandments means to choose life; for God will be able to grant His grace to those who keep them and fill them with blessing.

In our days, a spirit of self-determination or independence often lives in us and sometimes - so it seems - words like obedience, subordination and humility have become irritating words that immediately provoke a defence.

This spirit has come to permeate even our Church, and often the deeper meaning of these words is no longer understood. Perhaps one has in mind a spectre, in which obedience is confused with slavery; subordination with loss of one's honour; and humility with servility.

We may have had a bad experience with people or attitudes that abused these terms, but then it will be all the more important that we discover their true meaning and beauty.

Today's Bible text shows us how important true obedience is. We are not asked for blind or military obedience, but one in deep understanding. God, who has called us

to life, has set certain conditions for this life to unfold in harmony; or, failing that, to be destroyed.

It is easy to realize that criminality is a wrong choice of life. A criminal lives at the expense of other human beings; it is a life in the midst of darkness; a life that can succumb more and more to the abyss, a life full of dangers. And the reason is logical: he is not keeping the basic rules for a good life.

Then, by choosing the commandments, we are choosing life, just as God has it intended for men. If we consider the commandments not as a limitation to our possibilities of development, but as an offer of God's love so that we may know the true life, then we will obey with understanding. And it is not only a question of a life in fullness in this world, but also of attaining eternal life, as is shown by the answer Jesus gave the rich young man when he asked him: "*Master, what good deed must I do to possess eternal life?*" – "*Keep the commandments*", he told him (Mt 19,16-17)

Although we know that the words of today's reading are addressed concretely to the People of Israel, we can also interpret them in their spiritual dimension.

If we keep God's commandments, understanding them and fulfilling them not only in their literal content but also in their deeper meaning, thanks to Jesus' teachings (cf. Mt 5,27-28), then we can take possession of the "Promised Land".

And this "Promised Land" will be, in our reality, to possess the true life. That is, God's blessing will be poured out on the land of the soul, and His supernatural life will dwell in it and grow more and more. It is a life that begins here on earth and reaches its fullness in eternity. It is a life of blessing and joy, because peace and joy enter the heart. It is to this earth that Jesus refers when he says, "*Blessed are the meek, for they shall inherit the earth*" (Mt 5,5).

We see, then, that here obedience means listening to the truth and subordinating oneself to it in humility.

To oppose God's truth, on the other hand, will have obvious consequences: the inherited land will be spoiled and we will not be able to live long on it. God's life dies and its brilliance is lost. Life becomes dimmed and obscured...

We can choose life! It's our choice! If we choose it, the Lord's promise will be fulfilled for us: "*Choose life, then, so that you and your descendants may live, in the*

love of Yahweh your God, obeying his voice, holding fast to him; for in this your life consists, and on this depends the length of time that you stay in the country...”

Choosing life by opting for God's commandments means choosing Himself. This is what God proposed to the people of Israel, and this is what He continues to propose to us today!