

9. August 2020

“Zealous love”

Rom 9, 1- 5

This is the truth and I am speaking in Christ, without pretence, as my conscience testifies for me in the Holy Spirit; there is great sorrow and unremitting agony in my heart: I could pray that I myself might be accursed and cut off from Christ, if this could benefit the brothers who are my own flesh and blood. They are Israelites; it was they who were adopted as children, the glory was theirs and the covenants; to them were given the Law and the worship of God and the promises. To them belong the fathers and out of them, so far as physical descent is concerned, came Christ who is above all, God, blessed for ever. Amen.

What a heroic love speaks here from the heart of the apostle and we may take his words seriously. It is a great heartbreak for him that his people do not accept the Messiah, although they were especially blessed by God. Paul once again lists the advantages of the grace received for the people of Israel, only to mourn all the more that the decisive meeting with Jesus did not take place. The depth of his suffering even goes so far as to wish for a separation from Christ, if only his brothers could be saved!

Here the love of the Redeemer shines from the heart of the Apostle to the Nations, and we can thus take a look into the heart of God. God suffers because we humans do not accept salvation.

In our Lord what Paul is talking about happens: Jesus is counted among the criminals (*cf. Lk 22,37*), he is considered separated from God (*cf. Isa 53,4*) before the religious authorities of the time, a blasphemer (*cf. Mt 26,65*). He gives his life to save his own.

When Paul speaks of completing in his body what is still lacking in the suffering of the Church (*cf. Col 1,24*), then he knows that the redemption through Christ must still come to all people - and especially to his own people. To the greatness of love for Christ corresponds his grief and pain that it has not yet happened. But this becomes for him an incentive to *"work harder than all the others"* (*1Cor 15,10*) and not a reason to fall into depression. For Paul, his own salvation is no longer the primary theme, but the salvation of other people.

What spiritual benefit can we draw from the words we hear?

Once that we can never love enough. During our earthly pilgrimage we have never reached the end of our capacity to love. Love can always grow, it can become greater and purer. It is a gift, but also in its unfolding and in its growth it depends on our participation.

This is why it is necessary to implore the Lord to give us a burning love and to let him purify everything that stands in the way of love. As soon as we perceive coldness and lack of love in us, we should call upon the Holy Spirit to touch our coldness. We must not be shy, especially when we are dull and lethargic, when we cannot feel any warmth and light, to call on the name of the Lord. The decisive thing then is our will!

We all know that we cannot "make" such a burning love as St. Paul had in his heart. She cannot be "created" with however strong a will is. However, we can be careful to see what is in the way of love of our own attitudes, where love offers herself to grow in it and, with the help of God, to take steps and where it knocks at the door of the heart.

Then:

Let us remember the recent reflections on the love of our Father that wants to penetrate us. Also in the booklet "The Father speaks to his children" there is talk to proclaim the love of the Father to other people, because they should get to know his love and can also be lost!

One reason why the zealous love for the salvation of souls could cool down altogether is the lack of awareness of how important the message of the Gospel is. For example, if we assume that other religions are also a way of salvation and one is even saved - even if one does not believe - then zeal will slacken. To be honest: I feel sorry for the seminarians if they would be actually instructed like that. Hopefully the Spirit of the Lord will prevent them from falling into general sleep and blindness.

What would one answer St. Paul today if one heard these words of the reading? Perhaps one would say: "Paul, you are simply exaggerating. Your brothers do not need the message of the Gospel. They have their way. No need to be sad. You have to see it right. Today we know better." Or if someone comes and worries about the salvation of unbelievers. Perhaps one would answer. "Let's remain calm. God is merciful. If they just do good, it'll be okay."

Let us not be misled by anyone.

If our zeal for the salvation of souls is going to disappear, then we have a spiritual problem. Our love is not properly inflamed. Perhaps the general fog that modernism and progressivism spread and that is settled in souls by religious relativism has already taken hold of us. If we orientate ourselves towards the world and people instead of towards God, then we will no longer take up the Father's words from the message we have been contemplating the last days:

"If there is anything I desire at this time, it is this, a growing ardor in the zeal of the righteous. This would bring about a true and lasting conversion of sinners, as well as the return of the "Prodigal Sons" to their Father's house. This applies especially to the Jews, as well as to all others..."

Thank God our Father is not subject to the workings of the spirit of the times. He does not change, nor do the words of St. Paul!

If we listen to God and the Gospel, as well as to the authentic teaching of the Church, if we make a sincere effort for holiness, then - with the grace of God - the mist of relativism cannot blind us and let us lose our zeal for souls.