

27. September 2020

**“United in the spirit”**

*Phil 2,1-5*

*So if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love, any fellowship in the Spirit, any warmth or sympathy - I appeal to you, make my joy complete by being of a single mind, one in love, one in heart and one in mind. Nothing is to be done out of jealousy or vanity; instead, out of humility of mind everyone should give preference to others, everyone pursuing not selfish interests but those of others. Make your own the mind of Christ Jesus: Who, being in the form of God, did not count equality with God something to be grasped. But he emptied himself, taking the form of a slave, becoming as human beings are; and being in every way like a human being, he was humbler yet, even to accepting death, death on a cross. And for this God raised him high, and gave him the name which is above all other names; so that all beings in the heavens, on earth and in the underworld, should bend the knee at the name of Jesus and that every tongue should acknowledge Jesus Christ as Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The apostle, who obviously enjoys the church of Philippi and encourages her to follow the path she has begun with great sincerity, also holds a mirror before our eyes. What are our churches and communities like today? What is the state of the church? How do we deal with one another? How far are we ourselves people who can make peace?

Let us look at the statements:

*“if in Christ there is anything that will move you, any incentive in love”.*

Here the dimension of fraternal correction is addressed. It is intended to help the brother or sister to walk better with God. Connected with this is our own example, which should have a model function. In this text the term *“incentive in love”* is used directly after the exhortation in Christ. With this the apostle wants to emphasise which inner motivation should move us to meet and support our brothers and sisters in faith. This attitude runs through the whole first part of the text: brotherly love in the Spirit of the Lord!

It is what constitutes the communion established in the Lord: the whole affirmation of the other person who has become brother or sister to us in the Lord. This should not be determined by sympathy alone, or by the closeness of kinship alone, but should be totally imbued with the Spirit of God, reflecting the love of Christ himself.

This is a high demand, and we realize that our heart has to be transformed very much so that we become capable of this love. Under the action of grace, it is easy to feel the strength to face the challenge of this love, in a surge of the heart! And it is also true that the grace of God enables us to do so!

But in the long run we must realistically go our way and work on our heart, because ambition and glory come from our heart and must be overcome there. The critical question we have to ask ourselves Do we notice the shadows of our heart and give an account of them? Or more precisely: Are we even prepared to recognize ourselves, or do we flee from our mistakes and repress them?

With this we address the question of self-knowledge. We must not forget that after knowing God, self-knowledge is the most important thing, and that with the help of God we should be able to perceive ourselves. We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us all that needs to be touched more deeply by the Spirit of God. He will answer, and so with his help we can remove all that hinders love to be a light for others.

In all the necessary inner transformation we will be referred to the example of Christ. In him and in his discipleship we will be able to do what we cannot do by ourselves: a communion of brotherly love, united in the Lord, and minded in accordance with the life in Jesus Christ.

Please be aware that I gave a spiritual teaching on this theme on YouTube:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=KYGsM602NXA>