



9. September 2019 „To complete the suffering“

Col 1:24- 2:3

It makes me happy to be suffering for you now, and in my own body to make up all the hardships that still have to be undergone by Christ for the sake of his body, the Church, of which I was made a servant with the responsibility towards you that God gave to me, that of completing God's message, the message which was a mystery hidden for generations and centuries and has now been revealed to his holy people. It was God's purpose to reveal to them how rich is the glory of this mystery among the gentiles; it is Christ among you, your hope of glory: this is the Christ we are proclaiming, admonishing and instructing everyone in all wisdom, to make everyone perfect in Christ. I want you to know, then, what a struggle I am having on your behalf and on behalf of those in Laodicea, and on behalf of so many others who have never seen me face to face. It is all to bind them together in love and to encourage their resolution until they are rich in the assurance of their complete understanding and have knowledge of the mystery of God in which all the jewels of wisdom and knowledge are hidden.

Paul makes us aware of something very essential through his testimony. He could, and we too can, make a conscious contribution to the salvation that God offers us in Christ: to complete it in Christ's Body, the Church. We know the sufferings suffered by the apostle, as well as the inner sufferings of the apostolic ministry, which perhaps were the greater. They are central to the mission of the apostle entrusted to him by God. Jesus redeemed us not only through his Word, but also through his suffering and death. Since the Lord's victory, which he has acquired in principle through suffering, death, and resurrection, must be realized in all its fullness on earth, we can unite all our sufferings with the Lord and thus serve the Church.

It is good news if we become aware that everything we do and suffer in the Lord is part of the great evangelization of this world. Nothing is in vain; every last act counts, every little overcoming, every smallest sacrifice, every patient bearing of adverse circumstances becomes the "fuel" of the fire of evangelization!

Paul could even enjoy the suffering he endured for the Church. This becomes understandable only if we are aware of the fire of love that the apostle carried! He knew that his suffering supported his mission from inside, and that he envisioned the important dimension of the inner apostolate. The proclamation of the Word was thus deeply founded in God.

The apostle had to endure a hard fight. However, he did not say that in order to stand out and to draw attention to his merits, but to comfort the community in Laodicea. They should know that the apostle also suffered for them, following whom gave his lives for them.

It is also a comfort for us to know that so many have suffered, so that we find our way home to God. This makes it all the more important for us when we are confronted with our weaknesses and inability, and when we stay behind what we set out to do. We know: others have suffered and sacrificed for us!

I like to tell a little story in this context: It was in a Carmel. A little, old sister came up to me and spoke to me. She told me very lovingly that she would hiddenly support my mission. To this day, it is a consolation to know that somebody is praying for me, perhaps also suffering, and this causes an inner, invisible union in Christ with this sister. This is what St. Paul's phrase means when he says that hearts are held together in love. Every consciously accepted suffering increases love in the church.

And then it is the outward proclamation needed to teach people. The glorious message of Christ, in which all the treasures of wisdom and knowledge are hidden. What fullness of life God offers us in him! If our heart is filled with this love, then the mouth will also speak salutary words, so that all the fullness of insight can reach the people!