



## 15. September 2019 „God's Wrath and Mercy“

*Ex 32:7–11.13–14*

*Yahweh then said to Moses, 'Go down at once, for your people whom you brought here from Egypt have become corrupt. They have quickly left the way which I ordered them to follow. They have cast themselves a metal calf, worshipped it and offered sacrifice to it, shouting, "Israel, here is your God who brought you here from Egypt!" 'Yahweh then said to Moses, 'I know these people; I know how obstinate they are! So leave me now, so that my anger can blaze at them and I can put an end to them! I shall make a great nation out of you instead.' Moses tried to pacify Yahweh his God. 'Yahweh,' he said, 'why should your anger blaze at your people, whom you have brought out of Egypt by your great power and mighty hand? Remember your servants Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, to whom you swore by your very self and made this promise: "I shall make your offspring as numerous as the stars of heaven, and this whole country of which I have spoken, I shall give to your descendants, and it will be their heritage for ever." Yahweh then relented over the disaster which he had intended to inflict on his people.*

First, we look at the Lord, who is incensed by the behavior of the people. It is his people, it is his children of Israel, to whom he has given so many signs of his paternal love. Unlike other peoples who remain in their ignorance and often confused idols with God, the people of Israel knew who the true God is. But they quickly left his paths and became spiritually blind. Thus the wrath of God is born, his jealousy is awakened.

What does this mean?

The wrath of the Lord is an expression of the holiness and righteousness of God, which cannot tolerate anything contrary to God. It is the anger against sin that enslaves man, distorts the image of God in him, the refusal of the demons influencing people. The holiness of God - in which there is no darkness - must reject the darkness of sin and error. Just as on the way to eternity sin and its effects are purified in our souls, so God's holy people cannot fall back into the darkness of ignorance without to wake up the wrath of God.

The jealousy of the Lord means that love between God and man is comparatively like a marital love, which in its nature cannot allow any other connection with

another human being that is like this special love. Every connection with an idol is a spiritual adultery of the covenant with God

But then the Lord turns to Moses and Moses can appease God. We realize that the Lord exactly wants this. He wants to forgive his people. God wants Moses to remind him of his great love for his people. It is not as if God had forgotten them and the wrath had overwhelmed him in such a way that he no longer remembers his mercy. No, God includes man in his plan of salvation. This is reported to us in many places in the Scriptures and is also testified in the life of the Church.

In this way, we Catholics should remain aware that even humanly hopeless situations, which rightly irritate the wrath of God, can change. We remember of the meditation of yesterday. How justified the blazing wrath of God would have been when his son was crucified? But God took the wrath upon himself, and the cross became a sign of God's mercy. Jesus died for all mankind and said on the cross the words: *"Father forgive them, for they do not know what they are doing"* (Lk 23,34).

In order to gain the right image of God, it is important to have the right view of God's righteousness and mercy. It can happen easily that justice and the wrath of God will be at the forefront of the proclamation, or, as is increasingly the case in today's proclamation, that mercy is used too quickly, as if the wrath of God against sin is not really existing. The former kind of proclamation can create a barren hardness, the second way takes away from the faith the deep seriousness.

Thus, as today's example shows, the proclamation involves putting both sides in the right relationship. Sin must become aware in its abysmal reprehensiveness. On this way mercy shines all the higher and awakens the heart to gratitude and adoration. This basic attitude of mercy becomes clear in the last sentence. *"Yahweh then relented over the disaster which he had intended to inflict on his people."* This is what the Lord wants: to forgive us so that we can live.

Let us be very careful that idols of today do not confuse us and provoke the wrath of God. Today, as Christians, we know more about God than we did in the days of the Old Covenant. A relapse into pagan practices therefore obscures even more than ever when the bright light of the Lord had not yet appeared.

We must all be vigilant, because bad spirits are trying to deceive us. Let us hold on to the authentic teaching of the Church, which explains the Scripture to us in the light of the Spirit, and pray for the purification and enlightenment of our Holy Church. She must remain the protective barrier against errors!

