

10. October 2019

“God’s patience”

*Mal 3, 13-20a*

*'You have said harsh things about me, says Yahweh. And yet you say, "What have we said against you?" You have said, "It is useless to serve God; what is the good of keeping his commands or of walking mournfully before Yahweh Sabaoth? In fact, we now call the proud the happy ones; the evil-doers are the ones who prosper; they put God to the test, yet come to no harm!" ' Then those who feared Yahweh talked to one another about this, and Yahweh took note and listened; and a book of remembrance was written in his presence recording those who feared him and kept his name in mind. On the day when I act, says Yahweh Sabaoth, they will be my most prized possession, and I shall spare them in the way a man spares the son who serves him. Then once again you will see the difference between the upright person and the wicked one, between the one who serves God and the one who does not serve him. 'For look, the Day is coming, glowing like a furnace. All the proud and all the evil-doers will be the stubble, and the Day, when it comes, will set them ablaze, says Yahweh Sabaoth, leaving them neither root nor branch. But for you who fear my name, the Sun of justice will rise with healing in his rays, and you will come out leaping like calves from the stall.*

It is a great deception to think that one can live without asking deeper for the truth. Even if life seems to succeed outwardly, something unfulfilled and void remains in the depths of the soul, for the soul is created towards God. The deception goes even further if one believes that there is no difference to serve the Lord or not if one does not understand God's patience with men and think that man can do what he wants without Gods intervening.

But for those who try to walk God's ways, it may be soemtimes difficult to understand why God waits so long to apply his righteousness. We hear this in the prayers of the psalmes, we hear it from the disciples of the Lord (*cf. Lk 9,54*) and it also present in the apocalypse (*Rev 6,10*).

But today's text in particular reminds us of great patience and trust. Everything is and remains in God's hands.

There is a need for justice in us human beings, and from this point of view we may ask the Lord why it is the case that the wicked seem to be living a good life and the righteous often have much to suffer. This, of course, does not mean to talk in any form of self-righteousness that emphasizes one's own actions and compares them with the deeds of other people. No, such serious questions can rise from the depths of the soul and meet us through other people.

As Christians, we go beyond the point that seeks to establish justice alone. The door opens and the concern for those who do not follow the instructions of God is growing. What happens to them if they do not come home? How do they stand before God when their lives are even entangled in sin? When pride has entered deep into the heart of man, will there be a repentance?

It is the view of God's mercy that desires the conversion of the sinner who makes us the guardian of our brother. It is the love of God Himself that does everything to save the sinner and the confused. It becomes the leitmotif.

We see the new quality of love shown in the coming of our Lord. Instead to install righteousness alone, God opens his heart to the lost. The demand for justice remains, for a sinner and a wicked man cannot hide his deeds. But the love of God goes so far that the Lord on the cross gives himself to men and offers him forgiveness of all guilt. The Lord himself has fulfilled all righteousness. Man must only accept and repent.

Beyond the joy of righteousness, the pious enjoys even more in the repentance of the sinner. The prodigal son is received by his father and given a feast (*cf. Lk 15,11-32*). God's love and patience follows man in his ways and always hopes for his conversion, so that he will not get lost!