

25. October 2019

“Spiritual fight”

*Rom 7, 18-25*

*And really, I know of nothing good living in me -- in my natural self, that is -- for though the will to do what is good is in me, the power to do it is not: the good thing I want to do, I never do; the evil thing which I do not want -- that is what I do. But every time I do what I do not want to, then it is not myself acting, but the sin that lives in me. So I find this rule: that for me, where I want to do nothing but good, evil is close at my side. In my inmost self I dearly love God's law, but I see that acting on my body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. So I am brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body. What a wretched man I am! Who will rescue me from this body doomed to death? God - thanks be to him - through Jesus Christ our Lord. So it is that I myself with my mind obey the law of God, but in my disordered nature I obey the law of sin.*

The holy apostle Paul describes here the fight against one's own flesh - or in other words - the fight against our bad inclinations! The spiritual teachers point out that we are dealing with three enemies on our way of following Christ: the struggle with the devil, the struggle not to follow the temptations of the world, and the struggle with the flesh, what means to resist against our disordered sensual desires.

Perhaps one can say that the latter struggle is the hardest, because we are constantly dealing with it! Paul describes it very clearly: our reason is not strong enough to resist the temptations of sin! This is the result of original sin, whose effects are compounded by personal sins!

This deplorable inventory is necessary so that in understanding our situation as a human being, we would not rely on the goodness of our human nature, and therefore could be prone to unrealistic humanism!

It helps the realistic view that gives us the true teaching of the Church! Our will is weakened, but not completely destroyed! Therefore, we can set out with the grace of God to counteract the negative inclinations of our fallen nature! We have to face this struggle so that we can somehow regain the integrity of our person and, under the rule of God, become master in our own house!

This fight is what spiritual teachers call asceticism! The apostle of the people has already made it clear to us that salvation comes from our Lord Jesus Christ! Only in him and with his help, it becomes possible to permanently counteract our bad inclinations, to take up this fight and not to give it up even after defeat!

First of all, the sensual inclinations have to be taken into consideration or in other words: the so-called disordered passions!

An unbridled wrath leads us to the sin of injustice, unrestrained sexual desire is destructive, an unordered desire to eat can lead to glutton, greed binds man to himself and reduces his capacity to love. There are inclinations in us which the Lord clearly names and teaches us that evil comes from our own hearts! (*cf. Mt 15,19*).

However, to take up the fight against these inclinations seriously, it takes a basic decision! We must be ready for self-knowledge, and sincerely notice the evil in us. Not a few people are afraid to look at themselves in the mirror of the light of God. They are so terrified that they forget that they are standing in front of a loving Father who will help them to develop the very image of God in them! Therefore they are in danger to close their eyes to their evil inclinations and therefore do not fight them properly with the help of God! However, this will have a negative effect and can even make their religious attitude artificial, because they are inclined to want to see only their positive sides and to displace the negative sides!

Good to face reality! “*whom the Lord loves he chastens*”, as the Holy scriptures say (*Hb 12,6*). So it is God's love that wants us to fight with his help against the evil inclinations and try to realize the virtues! If I am not able to surrender totally special passions, but than I can at least try to control them with the help of God!

If I notice disordered inclinations in me, then I do not justify it - as it is usually the case - but begin to pray inwardly and try to restrain it in myself. It will be a long fight but very fruitful and on this way I also can show to our Lord my faithfulness.