

26. April 2020

“A life in the fear of God”

1 Pet 1,17-21

And if you address as Father him who judges without favouritism according to each individual's deeds, live out the time of your exile here in reverent awe. For you know that the price of your ransom from the futile way of life handed down from your ancestors was paid, not in anything perishable like silver or gold, but in precious blood as of a blameless and spotless lamb, Christ. He was marked out before the world was made, and was revealed at the final point of time for your sake. Through him you now have faith in God, who raised him from the dead and gave him glory for this very purpose – that your faith and hope should be in God.

The fear of God is the beginning of wisdom! We have already mentioned the gift of the fear of God, but it is worth looking at it more closely, because it is the apostle's advice to live a life in the fear of God! As long as we live in the "exile"- which we undoubtedly do before we have not yet fully entered the Eternal Kingdom of God and our life of discipleship is exposed to many dangers - the fear of God helps us to remain vigilant.

First of all, the gift of the fear of God, which is one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit, is associated with a great resistance, even hatred, against sin. The Holy Spirit pours this out on us and we know that it is sin alone that can separate us from God. That is why we avoid it and pay close attention to our ways, so that we do not carelessly fall into sin and become entangled in it.

On the one hand, we recognize God as a just judge, but through the gift of the Holy Spirit we also recognize Him as a loving Father who desires our salvation! Because we recognize God as the One who loves us so inexpressibly, we avoid sin primarily out of love for Him, because it can separate us from Him. So it is not so much the fear of a just judge that makes us avoid sin, although this is also better than sinning, but rather the childlike love that does not want to do anything that could hurt the Father.

The latter attitude - to avoid sin out of love for God - becomes a great incentive on the path of holiness and makes our lives very vigilant. It is not only about gross

sins, but the Holy Spirit teaches us more and more and very finely to cultivate attentively the loving relationship with our Father.

We also learn to perceive where the most difficult enemy is on our path of following Christ: He is within ourselves.

It is the will inclined towards evil and the disorderly passions, that is, that sensual desire within us that likes to go beyond the limits of what is good and meaningful. The apostle also gives us a very important clue for a life in fear of God. We should remember: *“For you know that the price of your ransom from the futile way of life handed down from your ancestors was paid, not in anything perishable like silver or gold, but in precious blood as of a blameless and spotless lamb, Christ.”*

This fundamental word can tame every frivolity in us, because when we have the suffering of the Lord before our eyes, we know the greatness of his love and also the gravity of sin. These two aspects act on the soul and cause it to avoid sin with great zeal and to respond to the love the Lord has shown us.

Today we see ourselves in danger of relativize more and more sin. It is certainly true that God looks to the good of man, and is ready to forgive at all times when man gives signs of conversion! But this does not take away anything from the gravity of sin and its destructive effects.

The gift of the fear of God helps us to take the right path, so that we do not become scrupulous and carry within us a false image of God- that of a God who watches over us strictly and mercilessly- nor does it make us reckless in our dealings with sin and relativize it.

We can pray for this gift so that it may become very fruitful in us. It keeps us in a wonderful spiritual balance: vigilance against the temptations from within and without, while at the same time trusting deeply in the heart of a loving Father. This also allows us to deal openly with our weaknesses and sins, to become aware of them and to carry them to our Father who is always waiting for us. The horror of sin and the remorse about it is followed by the certainty of forgiveness through the One who has redeemed us.

In this attitude we can also attentively meet other people. We will not trivialize their sins, nor will we consider their lives hopeless and lost.

May the Holy Spirit show us ways how to deal in wisdom with those who are still entangled in their sins, and how to help them find those paths to forgiveness that alone will set them free!