

30. June 2020

**"The self-deception"
Part 4**

Fr. Sladek's text on self-deception, which we read in these last three days, showed us how important it is to guard against spiritual blindness and to avoid any pretence in our imitation of Christ. Jesus warns us of this blindness by speaking of the log that we carry in our eye without realizing it (*cf. Mt 7,5*).

How can a self-deception arise and how can it be overcome?

Fr. Sladek made it clear in his text that we do not like to confront our selfish ego. Therefore, those hidden interests that tend to the satisfaction of the ego are displaced to the unconscious. Thus, we do not realize that we continue to seek our own interest, even though our will does not consciously desire it. Fr. Sladek describes it as an act which, although not consciously intended, is desired deep within the person.

Within the framework of self-knowledge, it must be possible to discover in ourselves these realities. Otherwise, we would simply be subject to our unconscious will, and we could easily excuse ourselves by saying: "That's the way I am, and I can't help it". With this attitude, we would not assume any responsibility for our actions.

I will now mention some suggestions for getting out of the blindness of self-deception:

1. Desire to see yourself before God as you are.

To know ourselves better, also in the depths of our being, it is important to have a true desire to know ourselves as we are before God. Often we build an image of ourselves; an image that corresponds to what we would like to be or to the example we try to imitate. Of course we can have examples to follow, but we cannot behave as if we would already imitate them to the full, repressing everything that does not correspond to this model. We must be realistic. If, for instance, Jesus Himself is our example, we must be clear that we need His grace to become like Him, and it will take a long time for that to happen. It would obviously be presumptuous to believe that we have already achieved this.

2. Know yourself before a merciful God.

We cannot insist enough that our self-knowledge must happen in the light of a merciful God. There is also a form of self-knowledge that comes from the Devil. This, besides not being fully true, is characterized by harshness and ruthlessness, and can lead us to despair. On the other hand, the self-knowledge that comes from the Holy Spirit brings consolation, for it leads us to the Cross of Christ, which is the throne of grace where we attain forgiveness and mercy (*cf. Heb 4,16*). The certainty and faith that God can and will forgive everything must penetrate deeply into our being, so that we can look upon our faults without fear.

3. Consider the obstacles that come from deep emotional wounds.

We must take into account that, in many cases, blindness to oneself is also conditioned by emotional wounds. For example, a person who has been severely corrected or even mistreated by his father for every fault he committed will have greater difficulty in recognizing God as a loving Father, before whom he can open ourselves without fear, confessing our mistakes and sins to him. In this case, a process of inner healing will first be necessary, so that the true image of the Father can be reconstructed.

4. Ask the Holy Spirit to give us His light.

The Holy Spirit can open our eyes, so that we can see God as He is, and at the same time realize the enormous chasm that exists between Him and us. But this is not a truth that fulminates us; it invites us to come closer to God, through the action of the Holy Spirit. Let us also ask him to purify our unconscious, so that there is nothing in it that blinds us. It is essential that we ask him for true humility, so that the Holy Spirit can remove the obstacles that pride and selfishness have built up.

5. Pay attention to our spontaneous reactions and statements.

For self-knowledge, it is important that we learn to perceive ourselves and to pay attention to our spontaneous reactions, because many times they express something of what we carry in our hearts. If we do not go over them, but realize that they are opposed to the fundamental orientation of our will, then we can place them before the Lord, asking him to help us overcome them, so that the depths of our being correspond more and more to what is right.

6. Accept the help of others.

Since our blindness can be quite strong, it would be a great gift from God to have a person who would make us see the contradictions within us. In this way, we could see ourselves and we can turn to God with all the shortcomings we have just discovered within ourselves.

7. Beg for the help of our Heavenly Mother.

Apart from the Lord, there is no one better than the Mother of God to help us on the path of following her Son. She will never disregard a plea we make to her for spiritual help. We can intrust her our unconscious and ask her to invoke the Holy Spirit to enlighten and strengthen us, so that we can come out of all blindness about ourselves. In this way, we will also be able to help others.