

8. August 2020

Memorial of St. Dominic

1. Cor 2, 2-10

Now when I came to you, brothers, I did not come with any brilliance of oratory or wise argument to announce to you the mystery of God. I was resolved that the only knowledge I would have while I was with you was knowledge of Jesus, and of him as the crucified Christ. I came among you in weakness, in fear and great trembling and what I spoke and proclaimed was not meant to convince by philosophical argument, but to demonstrate the convincing power of the Spirit, so that your faith should depend not on human wisdom but on the power of God. But still, to those who have reached maturity, we do talk of a wisdom, not, it is true, a philosophy of this age or of the rulers of this age, who will not last long now. It is of the mysterious wisdom of God that we talk, the wisdom that was hidden, which God predestined to be for our glory before the ages began. None of the rulers of the age recognised it; for if they had recognised it, they would not have crucified the Lord of glory; but it is as scripture says: What no eye has seen and no ear has heard, what the mind of man cannot visualise; all that God has prepared for those who love him; to us, though, God has given revelation through the Spirit, for the Spirit explores the depths of everything, even the depths of God.

We now return to the daily interpretations after the Father meditations and today we take the reading for the commemoration of St. Dominic's Day! He is a saint who rendered great service to the spreading of the Gospel and founded the Order of Dominicans; the Dominicans are also called the Order of Preacher Brothers. He was a contemporary of Saint Francis!

The Teacher of Peoples, St. Paul the Apostle, has again today something essential to say on the theme of evangelization! Without, for example, rejecting a solid education and appropriate, servant knowledge, it is not, however, the decisive thing in preaching! It is a mistake to think that one can convince people above all through polished speeches! It is easy for men to admire the speaker and his skilful expression rather than to advance to the content and encounter God's wisdom! Paul knows this and deliberately limits himself to bringing the message of the Crucified One to the people! This is the center of the proclamation, for here God's wisdom is revealed, who knows how to integrate even the misdeeds of men into his plan of salvation!

It was not the devil and the people who listened to him who were able to bring about their plans to destroy the message of the Messiah with the death of Jesus, but the cross became a sign of salvation, a sign of God's love for us human beings, a sign of Jesus' love for his Father and for us! Moreover, St. Paul came still in weakness and fear, that is, limited in his natural drives, so that he might not proclaim the message of salvation by his own strength, but in the power of God!

If we have "success" in the outward proclamation, it can happen very quickly that we easily attribute this to our own person! But this conceals the truth, we no longer rely primarily on the power of Christ and our person comes to the fore inadmissibly! This would be similar with the Dominican Order of Preachers if they were paying more attention to human and scientific education than to spiritual training!

St. Bernard of Clairvaux was a very great preacher who described monastic life in such an attractive way that - so they say - mothers hid their sons and daughters so that they would not, convinced by the words of St. Bernard, immediately enter one of the Cistercian monasteries!

It is reported that during a sermon he was tempted by the devil to vain thoughts about how well he was preaching, what wonderful words he would choose, etc...

St. Bernard noticed this and said to the devil, "Because of you I have not started to preach, and because of you I am not going to stop" and he completed his sermon!

This gives us an important clue as to how we should deal with possible vain thoughts and different kinds of conceit about our person!

The good gifts of God, such as an alert intellect, are given to us to serve God and mankind and not to build up our own person and its supposed greatness! That is why we always need to cultivate gratitude when we do something well, when we understand something well or when we are given light for a good sermon! All natural and supernatural gifts come from God and not from ourselves! God has given us these gifts and wants us to use them in the right way! So we are always first responsible to the giver of the gifts and not primarily to the people! Our task is to care for these gifts of God, so that they do not wither away and thus are not buried in the earth (*cf. Mt 25,18*)!

If we live in this awareness and always remain in exchange with God, the danger of arrogance is already reduced! If vain thoughts come from within ourselves or

are blown in by the devil, we encounter them in prayer with the indication that all the good we discover in ourselves comes from the Lord! This does not mean that we cannot rejoice when we have done something good, but it is the whole realization of the reality of man before God!

Especially in every kind of evangelization and mission, this basic vigilance is necessary: to be aware of ourselves, whether we speak too much of ourselves, say too many things that are not important, lose ourselves in words, lose sight of the essential of preaching, etc.

The Apostle to the Nations was aware of the great task he had, and even more: what a great message had been entrusted to him, which the Spirit revealed to him! Precisely for the sake of the greatness of the task of proclamation, it is important that we carry it out in the right spirit, that we do not lose sight of what is essential, that we also carefully examine the choice of words, so that we do not complicate or trivialise it, and that people come into contact with the greatness which “*God has prepared for those who love him*” (1 Cor 2,9b)!