

1. October 2020

“The victory of love”

Job 19:1.21-27

Pity me, pity me, my friends, since I have been struck by the hand of God. Must you persecute me just as God does, and give my body no peace? Will no one let my words be recorded, inscribed on some monument with iron chisel and engraving tool, cut into the rock for ever? I know that I have a living Defender and that he will rise up last, on the dust of the earth. After my awakening, he will set me close to him, and from my flesh I shall look on God. He whom I shall see will take my part: my eyes will be gazing on no stranger. My heart sinks within me.

All the terrible sufferings that Job had to endure, including the speeches of his friends, which he experienced as persecution, could not affect his longing to meet God, and thus his faith in the Saviour! Even if he felt God's admissions as persecution, his heart remained focused on God, and he came out of all the sufferings with even greater love!

If we place the sufferings of Job in the spiritual path, we can say that Job probably experienced elements of those "two nights" which in classical mysticism are called the "night of the senses" and the "night of the spirit"!

When God calls a soul on earth closer to Himself and gives it the grace to live more deeply united with Him in this life, then certain purifications take place, which should purify and increase the love of man!

To avoid any misunderstanding and to avoid giving the devil the opportunity to frighten the soul, it should be added that the way of Job is not intended for every soul in this manner, just as, for example, not everyone is called to bloody martyrdom like that of St Jean de Brébeuf! But the elements of such purification paths remain valid for all of us, which God in his wisdom - depending on the way in which he can guide the soul - allows to take effect, and may the final purification only take place after death!

The so-called “Night of the Senses” consists, among other things, in purifying man in his natural affection for the things of this world, for sensual pleasures and from his attachment to the transitory! Let us remember: the devil claimed that Job

worshipped God in this way only because God had given him so many goods and blessed his life (*cf. Job 1:9-11*). God then allowed all the riches to be taken away from Job (*v. 12*)! These purifications went even further for him later and also affected the health of his body (*2,7*)!

The aim of the purification is to make our love for God ever purer! Every disorderly attachment - whatever it may be - diminishes our response of love for God! For example, if I have many goods like Job, it is quite possible that I am doubly impaired in my love for God:

1. It is possible that I love the goods themselves too much!
2. My love for God can be especially marked by the fact that he has blessed me so much with material goods!

Both dangers of my ability to love being impaired therefore need purification, for we are to learn to love God for His sake! Thus the loss of earthly goods - as it happened with Job - is an element of purification and testing, in such a situation to focus completely on God, to discover the true treasure more deeply in him and thus to grow in love! In this way our love also becomes more selfless and does not primarily attach itself to the gifts God gives, but to the giver, God himself!

Elements of the “Night of the Spirit” are the purification of the mind, when it is more rooted in its natural speculations and reflections than enlightened by the supernatural light of God! Thus purification is also necessary in the spiritual realm, for there are sometimes great attachments to one's own thoughts and ideas, and one is in danger of loving them more than God himself!

Job had to deal with the arguments of his friends, and in the course of these conversations and in the process of purification the expression of his devotion to God becomes more and more pure, as we can read today at the end of the text! In the way of Job there is another element of purification: his closest friends and relatives do not understand him and become almost enemies for him! In this too he is purified so that his love is primarily and completely directed towards God!

Despite the moments of Job's purification, which might be frightening for us, the goal - seen from God's point of view - is clear: Job passes the trials and the victory of love becomes visible! God always pursues this intention, even if we are sometimes not able to recognise it on dark nights! Therefore our trust is requested! With this trust we can honour the Lord very much, especially when we have to endure times of trial!