

6. September 2020

„Love and do what you want!”

Rom 13,8-10

The only thing you should owe to anyone is love for one another, for to love the other person is to fulfil the law. All these: You shall not commit adultery, You shall not kill, You shall not steal, You shall not covet, and all the other commandments that there are, are summed up in this single phrase: You must love your neighbour as yourself. Love can cause no harm to your neighbour, and so love is the fulfilment of the Law.

From Saint Augustine comes the wonderful word: *"Love and do what you want!"*

Indeed, when we love, we have understood what our life is all about. When we love, we respond to our deepest reason for being, namely to be loved by God. And to love the other is the concretisation of this love, the consequence of being loved by God. Who could close his heart to the other person when he knows that he himself is loved? If we truly love - and this does not mean desire - then love tells us what to do. Thus the word of St. Augustine opens up!

However, we must always remember what this love is and how we can realise it, because the word of St. Augustine sounds wonderful, but it is not so easy to put it into practice in the right spirit. All too often, disordered self-love stands in the way of our true capacity for love, and overcoming this is one of the most difficult spiritual tasks, because it accompanies us everywhere and belongs to us like a shadow, so to speak.

Now there is an orderly self-love, because everyone takes care of his body, his health and so on, and this has its justification. Scripture tells us: *"Love your neighbour as yourself"* (Lev 19,18 and Mk 12,31) and even puts self-love before our eyes, so that we can use it as a yardstick for loving our neighbour.

But disordered self-love goes beyond this God-given standard and seeks its own advantage, often without remembering the other person or God. Unfortunately, this is a legacy that we have brought with us from the Fall (cf. Gen 3,1-7), when man turned away from the commandments of God and thus violated love towards God. We saw the immediate consequence, because fratricide soon came into the world (cf. Gen 4,1-8)!

“If you love me you will keep my commandments” (Jn 14,15), the Lord tells us, and he explains to us even more deeply how these commandments are to be understood. The evil deed is preceded by disordered lust and desire, and if we follow false desire, it gives birth to sin (*cf. Jas 1,14-15*)!

When we love, that is, when the Holy Spirit works in us as the love of the Father and the Son. He already makes us aware of the disordered desire in us and offers us His help to overcome it, because love does not do evil. Neither do we then want to hurt the love of God or of our neighbour.

Thus, our spiritual desire should be to grow constantly in love. Every day gives us the opportunity to do this: through prayer and great attention to God and his guidance, we can discover his love more and more and welcome God ever more deeply into ourselves. This love then wants to communicate itself to others in the proclamation of God's love and in the concrete love of brothers and sisters and of God. Just as God meets us and shows us his love, so we are called to treat our neighbour in the same way! God himself is our teacher here!