

**16. October 2020**

**“Asceticism”**

**Part 4**

If we have learned to order our flow of speech and not just let it flow unhindered to the outside world, then the question now is what and how we say it.

The apostle admonishes us: *“No foul word should ever cross your lips... do good to your listeners”* (Eph 4:29) and elsewhere he tells us: *“now you also must give up all these things: (...) abusive language and dirty talk”* (Col 3:8)

Now we are entering into a very essential area, as Jesus makes clear: *“For the words of the mouth flow out of what fills the heart”* (Lk 6:45) and: *“It is what comes out of someone that makes that person unclean. For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge...”* (Mk 7:20-21). So we conclude: All the evil and unjust things that we say, etc., come from our heart. So our heart has to be purified if we want to be able to say more and more good and helpful things.

This is where our asceticism, i.e. our effort of the will, has its limits. We can help to get a new heart: *“make yourselves a new heart”* (Ezek 18,31), but first of all we need the grace of God: *“I shall give you a new heart, and put a new spirit in you; I shall remove the heart of stone from your bodies and give you a heart of flesh instead.”* (Ezek 36,26)

But the Lord loves it when we go as far as possible towards him, that is, when we direct our will towards him so that he can then give us what he has planned.

Even if we cannot give ourselves a new heart from which evil thoughts of any kind are completely removed, we can already take an essential step to not pass on to others the dark that comes from our heart. So asceticism can prevent evil from being spoken. This is already a big step, because then it does not directly hurt the other person and does not spread the shadow on the verbal level.

However, asceticism is not given the power to prevent evil thoughts from existing in the heart. To cleanse the heart is the task of the Holy Spirit.

But here too we can help.

As a reminder: First of all, with the help of asceticism, we have to master "talking a lot", then we have to prevent bad words from being spoken by us.

So when evil thoughts arise from our heart, we must first of all notice them and take an inner position on them, not justify or displace them. Displacement would mean to pretend that they do not exist. This takes revenge with inner tensions and these are often expressed in biting remarks.

We must perceive these unpleasant thoughts and refuse them. Refuse means in this case to express with our will that we do not agree with them. This is a very important step, because often we justify ourselves and our behaviour, but it cannot be sustained in the light of the Gospel. With such a step, the unpleasant thoughts do not usually dissolve, but we withdraw our affirmation from them!

Now we turn to the Lord in inner prayer and ask Him to give us His Spirit to overcome these thoughts and feelings. I always call on the Holy Spirit (our divine friend) and ask him to touch my negative thoughts, because he is the love between Father and Son and is poured out into our hearts (*cf. Rom 5:5*). This means in concrete terms that I carry the unpleasant things that come out of me to him who is pure love, where there is nothing impure, no evil, no lies, no disorderly self-love ... Let us take a biblical image: We carry the dark to where there is the fire of love, which also has the quality of purification (*cf. 1 Pet 1:7*).

This latter process is a key to how we can cooperate in the purification of our heart, where evil comes from. After all, it is the task of the Holy Spirit to guide us on the path of sanctification, so we carry all the unholy within us to him the Holy One and ask him to touch it through himself. In this way God can give us a pure heart: *"Blessed are the pure in heart: they shall see God."* (*Mt 5:8*)

Tomorrow I will take up the theme again and link it to the importance of the spiritual struggle to which we are all called.