

19. October 2020

“It is by grace that we have been saved”

Eph 2:1-10

And you were dead, through the crimes and the sins which used to make up your way of life when you were living by the principles of this world, obeying the ruler who dominates the air, the spirit who is at work in those who rebel. We too were all among them once, living only by our natural inclinations, obeying the demands of human self-indulgence and our own whim; our nature made us no less liable to God's retribution than the rest of the world. But God, being rich in faithful love, through the great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, brought us to life with Christ - it is through grace that you have been saved and raised us up with him and gave us a place with him in heaven, in Christ Jesus. This was to show for all ages to come, through his goodness towards us in Christ Jesus, how extraordinarily rich he is in grace. Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit. We are God's work of art, created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life.

The Lord transforms us in His goodness and grace from “children of wrath” to children who respond to His love and now become true children of God. They are no longer just brothers after blood, but are born again of “water and the Spirit” (*cf. Jn 3:5-6*). Brothers by blood were Cain and Abel (*cf. Gen 4:1-10*) and the story of Cain and Abel is repeated in the history of mankind. Man can even become the murderer of the brother. The bloodshed continues to this day. The only real hope for humanity, which does not improve from within itself, as the suffering of the past shows, is the mercy of God, His infinite patience and the sacrifice of Jesus on the cross, which redeems the “children of wrath”.

As long as mankind has not accepted the Lord as Saviour, it cannot properly receive the love of God. Although this love of God is there for all his creatures and he is constantly seeking them to lead them home, they still remain under the dominion of that Spirit who reigns in the air, following the lusts of the flesh and what the evil mind gives to men.

This realistic description of the metaphysical situation of earthly man is contrasted with the bright light of God. “*But God, being rich in faithful love, through the*

great love with which he loved us, even when we were dead in our sins, brought us to life with Christ (...). Because it is by grace that you have been saved, through faith; not by anything of your own, but by a gift from God; not by anything that you have done, so that nobody can claim the credit.”

These words now place us in the reality of our lives. We ourselves cannot redeem ourselves, neither institutions, nor parties, governments, other religions, nor even human efforts to create a better world. Everything must be permeated by the grace of God and requires an encounter with Christ. This is what God has intended and offers as His gift, opening us to the overflowing richness of His grace.

It is clear from this that there is a difference between being still under the influence of the evil spirit as “children of wrath”, or whether the grace of God can reign in the life of man, so that the Lord can also exercise his royal rule of love in the life of the individual.

But in order not to be proud, the apostle adds that it is a gift that we do not receive because of our works. Therefore any arrogance must be kept away if we are at home in the true faith. In addition, even “children of light” (*cf. Eph 5:8*) can prove themselves unworthy of it, and fall away from God again.

But it would be false humility not to testify that true peace is only possible through Christ. It would also be false humility to want to place Christ among all religions and thus lose sight of true salvation.

Instead, it is true that we are *“created in Christ Jesus for the good works which God has already designated to make up our way of life.”*

As redeemed people we are called to have our ear to the heart of God to listen to what we have to do every day. Like the holy angels, may the Holy Spirit make us ready to do God's will gladly, immediately and completely.

With our word, the transformation of our being according to the heart of Jesus, and through the good works that God has foreseen for us, we are then able to participate in the establishment of the Kingdom of God in which our Lord exercises his loving royal rule together with the Queen of Hearts, Mary, Mother of God. It is about this Kingdom to which all people are invited, which is not made by human hands.