

29. April 2021

“The spirit of those sent”

Jn 13:16-20

'In all truth I tell you, no servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the one who sent him. Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly. I am not speaking about all of you: I know the ones I have chosen; but what scripture says must be fulfilled: 'He who shares my table takes advantage of me'. I tell you this now, before it happens, so that when it does happen you may believe that I am He. In all truth I tell you, whoever welcomes the one I send, welcomes me, and whoever welcomes me, welcomes the one who sent me.'

The word of the Lord at the beginning can always prevent us from acting in self-authorised pride. Just as Jesus as the Son of God understood himself to be sent by the Father and made this clear again and again, so those who are in his service are sent by Him. The Lord obviously wants to make this clear to His disciples, knowing full well that we humans are in danger of forgetting this and wanting to draw from ourselves.

This ties in with man's primal temptation to want to be like God (*cf. Gen 3:5*), and also with the temptation of the fallen angel.

God's glorious gifts were given for service, Lucifer misused them for himself and wanted to be like the One who had sent him. We human beings can also fall into the same danger, and history tells enough of how people have succumbed to this temptation!

So there are two strong elements that we have to watch out for according to Jesus' words: *“No servant is greater than his master, no messenger is greater than the One who sent him. Now that you know this, blessed are you if you behave accordingly.”*

The one element - as explained - is a reminder to be in service and not to exalt ourselves. The other element is the realisation that we have been entrusted with a mission and are conscious of the dignity of the One who sent us. This lifts us up in difficult hours when we realise that we live in the strength of Him who is sending us; for we are strengthened by God in all situations and can thus grow in the task

entrusted to us. The trust that God places in us and the vigilance of responsibility before Him keep us awake to fulfil the task and, in the grace of God, can also give us the necessary perseverance.

The problem is that we can lose our vigilance on the way and thus more easily fall into the temptation to turn our attention more to our own person and its needs than to grow in our relationship with God.

We can look at it in the example of a religious vocation. It needs a daily, living responsibility before God, nourished by prayer and the fulfilment of the assigned task. This realisation directs the religious person to go on daily, even if the way is long and one is in danger of tiring.

In doing so, it is helpful to remember that our life is to serve the glorification of God, that it is not directed towards ourselves, if we may also reap the fruits of such a journey - travelled in faithfulness. *“anyone who hates his life in this world will keep it for eternal life”*, the Lord tells us (*Jn 12:25b*).

The intimate union between the one who sent - and all sending comes from God - and the one who is sent then opens up into another dimension!

If we look at the disciples of the Lord, we see that those who welcome the message of the sent disciples welcome Jesus, who is sent by the Father, and thus also welcome the Father (*cf. Mt 10:40*). In this way, the Lord's mission continues to unfold until the present time.

When we listen to the Church, which in turn listens to the Lord and is sent by Him, then we are in the most intimate union with God, from Whom all things proceed!

In these spiritual structures, the mission lives on to this day.

The washing of the feet, which takes place immediately before the words of the Lord, also shows how this service is to be understood. God's love wants to lean down to man. It does not appear worldly and imperious, it does not need any external means of power, but it calls the disciple into a humble service.

With the washing of the feet, the Lord has set this sign, which the disciples are always to orientate themselves by. The one sent by God should also carry out the mission in the right spirit: Pride, vanity, an attitude of always pretending to be right, arrogance, anger and all the shortcomings and deformations of our fallen

human nature are to be overcome or at least restrained, so that the disciple also carries out his mission in the Spirit of the One who called him.