

25. May 2021

## “God's generosity”

*Sir 35:1-12*

*One who keeps the Law multiplies offerings; one who follows the commandments offers communion sacrifices. Proof of gratitude is an offering of fine flour, almsgiving a sacrifice of praise. To abandon wickedness is what pleases the Lord, to give up wrong-doing is an expiatory sacrifice. Do not appear empty-handed in the Lord's presence; for all these things are due under the commandment. The offering of the upright graces the altar, and its savour rises before the Most High. The sacrifice of the upright is acceptable, its memorial will not be forgotten. Honour the Lord with generosity, do not stint the first-fruits you bring. Add a smiling face to all your gifts, and be cheerful as you dedicate your tithes. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, as generously as your means can afford; for the Lord is a good rewarder, he will reward you seven times over. Do not try to bribe him with presents, he will not accept them, do not put your faith in wrongly motivated sacrifices; for the Lord is a judge who is utterly impartial.*

In simple words, Jeus Sirach tells us how to serve God in the right way, how to make our whole life a gift to God. It is not difficult at all, if our hearts and wills are ready to serve God. The possibilities of living pleasingly to God are innumerable. When the gift of piety works in us, it wants to seize all opportunities to show God our love.

Along the way, we encounter the generosity of God, who makes every gesture of love, every act of repentance, every almsgiving a pleasant fragrance. God rewards us even for what should be the most natural for us, for what is really due to us to do, namely leaving the path of wickedness: *“To abandon wickedness is what pleases the Lord, to give up wrong-doing is an expiatory sacrifice.”* God never forgets the good we do!

God's generosity frees us from our narrowness. It springs from God's love, which leaves no stone unturned to reach man, to invite him to reveal His glory to him. We can see how far God bends down in the coming of our Lord Jesus, *“who was for a short while made less than the angels”* (Heb 2:9a), in order to be with us and to offer us His redeeming love.

What can we now offer to God, how can we be generous to God? The Lord himself gives us the answer: *“Honour the Lord with generosity, do not stint the first-fruits you bring. Add a smiling face to all your gifts, and be cheerful as you dedicate your tithes. Give to the Most High as he has given to you, as generously as your means can afford; for the Lord is a good rewarder, he will reward you seven times over.”*

To the generosity we are twice addressed, for we are in danger of diminishing our gift, of not giving ourselves to God as it is possible, always in danger of withholding something from ourselves. We gain generosity when we give to the Most High as He has given to us. This means the imitation of the Lord, the inner understanding and grasping of His nature, who gives because He loves. It takes us beyond our narrow limits and achieves what the Holy Spirit wants to work in us.

These are very concrete steps that can lead us to the full surrender of our lives. Today's text mentions a few: Keeping the commandments of God, proving gratitude, almsgiving with joy, to abandon wickedness and giving up wrong-doing, walking uprightly before God...

The more we practise and try to imitate the generosity of God day by day, the more we gain a generous heart. The gifts of God bring this about in us and make love grow.

If in today's reading God's goodness promised us a sevenfold recompense for the good we do, in today's Gospel it even presents Peter with a hundredfold recompense, who followed the Lord's call with generosity.

*“Peter took this up. 'Look,' he said to him, 'we have left everything and followed you.' Jesus said, 'In truth I tell you, there is no one who has left house, brothers, sisters, mother, father, children or land for my sake and for the sake of the gospel who will not receive a hundred times as much, houses, brothers, sisters, mothers, children and land - and persecutions too - now in this present time and, in the world to come, eternal life.” (Mk 10:28-30)*

The Lord's generosity cannot be surpassed, but we can imitate it.

It has two directions for us: towards God and towards our neighbour. Both dimensions need to be realised. If this happens, then another valuable gift is added. We receive a self-love ordered in God that overcomes tough egoism and sticky

narcism. A basic security in God grows, we learn to deal properly with our faults and to live in an ever-growing trusting relationship with God. A taste of paradise!