

23. July 2021

“The growth of supernatural life”

Gal 2:19-20 (Reading corresponding to the memorial of Saint Brigida)

'In fact, through the Law I am dead to the Law so that I can be alive to God. I have been crucified with Christ and yet I am alive; yet it is no longer I, but Christ living in me. The life that I am now living, subject to the limitation of human nature, I am living in faith, faith in the Son of God who loved me and gave himself for me. '

St. Paul understood the liberating power of the Gospel and understood that man's salvation does not come from fulfilling many precepts but from accepting in faith what Jesus did for us. According to what the Church teaches us, in baptism man receives forgiveness and from there he can grow and mature in the new life that God has instilled in him. This supernatural life is what the Apostle means when he says that it is no longer he who lives, but Christ lives in him.

Now the gift of God is to develop more and more in us, and Christ is to take more and more form in us.

How can this happen?

Let us look at what the Spirit of God works in us. It is He who reminds us of all that Jesus said and did (*cf. Jn 14:6*). He is, so to speak, the living reminder of the Lord in us. This supernatural life needs to be cultivated day by day, which happens through:

a) The reading of Sacred Scripture, so that the Word can penetrate deeply into our heart. If it takes root and remains rooted there through the Spirit, it will transform our heart and our way of thinking, for the Word of God itself will become the norm for our actions.

The more we become accustomed to reading the Bible - which, by the way, requires real and continuous training - the more we will be able to taste the spiritual flavour of God's Word and the nourishment it contains. When Jesus was tempted by the Devil in the desert, he answered him: *“Man does not live by bread alone, but by every word that proceeds from the mouth of God” (Mt 4:4)*. Thus, soul and spirit are nourished by the Word of God and thus Christ takes on more and more form in us, as St. Paul exclaims: "Christ lives in me".

b) Obedience to the Holy Spirit. This is a very important process, which takes place on different levels. It takes place when we fulfil what was mentioned in point a., when

we follow the authentic doctrine of the Church and when we learn to perceive the voice of the Spirit within us, for it is He who leads us to the full truth (*cf. Jn 16:13*). At this point, it is also worth meditating a little on the gifts of the Holy Spirit and how they act within us, for it is they who transform us, making the face of Christ shine within us.

Let us take as an example the gift of the fear of God. When it begins to work in us, we begin to be very careful not to do anything that might offend our Heavenly Father and that is contrary to the spirit of the Gospel. For example: idle talk, slander, impure images, evil thoughts, speaking evil of other people, and many other things.

We can see that a Spirit of love is at work here, and that it increases our love for God and our love for our neighbour.

When the gift of the fear of God is at work in us, an inner transformation takes place and we become more like Jesus, for He never did or would have done or said anything that would offend God or man.

Thus, we become very careful and attentive in all that we say and think. In this way, this gift, as well as all the other gifts of the Holy Spirit, becomes our inner teacher and shaper. The more subtly it can work, the more quickly we will notice whether what we are thinking, feeling or doing corresponds to this gentle Spirit of fear.

It is also good to pay attention to what arises in our heart, for that is where evil thoughts come from, as Jesus clearly tells us (*cf. Mt 15:19*). If what is arising within us is not in accordance with this gift of the Spirit, then we correct it through prayer and a decision of our will.

Let us go one step further and meditate also on the gift of piety, which is another of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit that have been poured out on us. The spirit of piety leads us to aspire to that which pleases God, our Father. That is to say that we no longer only try to avoid that which separates us from Him and offends Him, but to do that which pleases Him, to seek His will and to do it willingly. It is clear that this was precisely the attitude of Jesus, who came into the world to do the will of the Father (*cf. Jn 4:34*).

From this meditation, let us remain with this impulse: the life of Jesus wants to develop more and more within us, so that the words of St. Paul also become a reality in us: it is "*Christ living in me*".