



11. August 2021

“The Special Vocation of Moses”

*Deut 34:1-12*

*Then, leaving the Plains of Moab, Moses went up Mount Nebo, the peak of Pisgah opposite Jericho, and Yahweh showed him the whole country: Gilead as far as Dan, the whole of Naphtali, the country of Ephraim and Manasseh, the whole country of Judah as far as the Western Sea, the Negeb, and the region of the Valley of Jericho, city of palm trees, as far as Zoar. Yahweh said to him, 'This is the country which I promised on oath to give to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob, saying: I shall give it to your descendants. I have allowed you to see it for yourself, but you will not cross into it.' There in the country of Moab, Moses, servant of Yahweh, died as Yahweh decreed; he buried him in the valley, in the country of Moab, opposite Beth-Peor; but to this day no one has ever found his grave. Moses was a hundred and twenty years old when he died, his eye undimmed, his vigour unimpaired. The Israelites wept for Moses on the Plains of Moab for thirty days. The days of weeping for the mourning rites of Moses came to an end. Joshua son of Nun was filled with the spirit of wisdom, for Moses had laid his hands on him, and him the Israelites obeyed, carrying out the order which Yahweh had given to Moses. Since then, there has never been such a prophet in Israel as Moses, the man whom Yahweh knew face to face. What signs and wonders Yahweh caused him to perform in Egypt against Pharaoh, all his servants and his whole country! How mighty the hand and great the fear that Moses wielded in the eyes of all Israel!*

Moses... There was no other like him, as the last lines of today's reading tell us. The uniqueness of Moses' vocation does not rule out that there are other vocations as well, but they must never be confused, but their uniqueness must be preserved, just as God Himself defended it in the case of Moses.

Miriam and Aaron learned of this uniqueness when they rebelled against Moses, as described in chapter 12 of the Book of Numbers:

*"Miriam, and Aaron too, criticised Moses over the Cushite woman he had married. He had indeed married a Cushite woman. They said, 'Is Moses the only one through whom Yahweh has spoken? Has he not spoken through us too?' Yahweh heard this."*

Then God confronted them, saying, *"Listen to my words! if there is a prophet among you, I reveal myself to him in a vision, I speak to him in a dream. Not so with my servant Moses; to him my whole household is entrusted; to him I speak face to face, plainly and not in riddles, and he sees Yahweh's form. How, then, could you dare to criticise my servant Moses? Yahweh's anger was aroused by them. He went away, and as soon as the cloud left the Tent, there was Miriam covered with a virulent skin-disease, white as snow! Aaron turned to look at her and saw that she had contracted a virulent skin-disease."*

Under the pretext of having an accusation against Moses, they put themselves on the same level with him, *"Is Moses the only one through whom Yahweh has spoken? Has he not spoken through us too?"* They had not understood that the Word of the Lord had been addressed to Moses, and that they themselves had received their position from God through Moses. The hierarchy was clear, and the Lord re-established it in the sight of all.

From this example, then, we can reflect on the vocation that God gives. He gives it to each person in a unique way, for each one is created in the image of God.

Let us think, for example, of St. Clare of Assisi, whose memory we celebrate today. There will never be a second St. Clare. In her and in her particular vocation God's grace was manifested in a unique way, making her what she was... No one could say: "But I too have God's grace and I want to have a position like the one God gave to St. Clare". Although we can see how absurd such an attitude is, it does exist in man. He does not want to recognise different vocations. Instead of considering such differences as a richness and worshipping God for His infinite Wisdom, one runs the risk of envying the other person's position and prestige, and of wanting to demand it also for oneself.

Could we imagine that in the hierarchy of angels, one who belongs to a lower choir would claim another place? No! Then where did this temptation come from, into which Miriam and Aaron fell, pretending to put themselves on a level with Moses? Not so with Joshua, who succeeded Moses at God's appointment.

I think the deeper origin of this temptation can be perceived in Lucifer. He, who had been graced by God as light bearer and morning star, became "drunken" with his own gifts and no longer wanted to owe them to God. This gave rise to other evils, namely the desire to exalt one's own person.

We find this seduction already in the story of the fall into sin: "*you will be like gods*" (Gen 3:5). Here it is no longer a question of welcoming with gratitude what God does and grants, but one focuses on one's own person and its supposed privileges. From this point on, one immediately runs the risk of diminishing the merits of other people, of not recognising God's action in his particular character, of relativising a special vocation, etc.

Why don't we simply accept it as God said about Moses? His vocation was unique, incomparable... Let us rejoice and be thankful for it. This is also the proper way to overcome all forms of envy in ourselves so that we can rejoice in the gifts the other person has received.

If we were to envy them, we would in a way be indirectly trying to correct God.

He raises up special vocations for the good of men, in order to glorify Himself marvellously in them. Each one must take his rightful place, in peace and without envying other vocations.