

12. September 2021

God's thoughts are not man's thoughts

Mk 8:27-35

Jesus and his disciples left for the villages round Caesarea Philippi. On the way he put this question to his disciples, 'Who do people say I am?' And they told him, 'John the Baptist, others Elijah, others again, one of the prophets.' 'But you,' he asked them, 'who do you say I am?' Peter spoke up and said to him, 'You are the Christ.' And he gave them strict orders not to tell anyone about him. Then he began to teach them that the Son of man was destined to suffer grievously, and to be rejected by the elders and the chief priests and the scribes, and to be put to death, and after three days to rise again; and he said all this quite openly. Then, taking him aside, Peter tried to rebuke him. But, turning and seeing his disciples, he rebuked Peter and said to him, 'Get behind me, Satan! You are thinking not as God thinks, but as human beings do.' He called the people and his disciples to him and said, 'If anyone wants to be a follower of mine, let him renounce himself and take up his cross and follow me. Anyone who wants to save his life will lose it; but anyone who loses his life for my sake, and for the sake of the gospel, will save it.'

Since I have already reflected on this Gospel passage in previous meditations (<http://en.elijamission.net/thinking-like-god-thinks/>), I would like to focus today on that part when Peter intends to rebuke the Lord for what He had so openly told them about His Passion, Death and Resurrection.

This passage is enormously important for the discernment of spirits! Certainly Peter acted out of good intention on a subjective level. He probably gave Jesus to understand that He should not go to Jerusalem, where so much suffering awaited Him.

Let us remember that, in another situation, Jesus' relatives also wanted to prevent Jesus from continuing His mission to the people, because they said that *"He is out of his mind."* (Mk 3:21)

Jesus' rebuke is very clear! The Lord sees that Satan is behind, acting through Peter and using human thoughts, to prevent Jesus from fulfilling His mission.

It is important for us to understand that Satan does not always attack

directly. In a way, he prefers to hide behind the seductions of the world, the lusts of the flesh or even human thoughts and feelings. The latter are often not God-centred, and a real change in our way of thinking and acting is often quite a long process.

If now the “human spirit” dominates more and more in our Church, the focus is no longer on God and the ability to discern is clouded. Then the Church no longer sees the respective situation from God's perspective, trying to understand it from God, but the opposite happens. A worldly and human vision begins to dominate, and it is precisely this situation that Satan can use for his purposes.

I would like to clarify this with a concrete example:

We are currently in a peculiar situation with regard to the coronavirus crisis. I do not want to discuss the proposed measures now. But what is striking is that the shepherds of the Church hardly ever publicly raise the question of what God wants to tell us by allowing such a plague. Yet this is the decisive dimension for gaining a broader view and understanding the meaning of God's permission. Instead, one hears almost only the exhortation to comply with this or that measure and to return to “normal life” as soon as possible, for which one is prepared to pay almost any price.

We see, then, that the focus is mainly on human aspects, trying to find a solution mostly on the human level. In this way, Satan achieves quite easily that the dimension in question is not addressed at all. It is about the conversion of men to God, because for a long time their sins have been crying out to heaven and are becoming more and more public. So, if God permits such a plague because of sins, He is calling us to conversion, penitence and atonement.

Perhaps these are words that one does not like to hear. But it is not about grim, and gloomy mortification; it is about us, as believers, taking responsibility.

In the foreground is our own sincere conversion, the deepening of our journey of following Christ and the letting go of those things that hinder us.

As far as atonement is concerned, we can offer the Lord our persevering prayer, assure Him of our love and intercede for those who allow themselves to be seduced into disregarding God's commandments, and who miss out on the grace of reconciliation that the Lord offers us.

A good example of this is the prayer of Fatima: “O my Jesus, forgive us our sins, save us from the fire of hell, lead all souls to heaven, especially those who are in most need of Thy mercy.”

If we put these indications into practice, instead of moving only in our human way of thinking, we will certainly understand better the meaning of God's having allowed such a situation. We will also give a more authentic response to this plague if we consider it as a call from God, than if we ignore the supernatural dimension in this whole event.