

13. October 2021

Clear words of the Apostle

Rom 2:1-11

'So no matter who you are, if you pass judgement you have no excuse. It is yourself that you condemn when you judge others, since you behave in the same way as those you are condemning. We are well aware that people who behave like that are justly condemned by God. But you - when you judge those who behave like this while you are doing the same yourself - do you think you will escape God's condemnation? Or are you not disregarding his abundant goodness, tolerance and patience, failing to realise that this generosity of God is meant to bring you to repentance? Your stubborn refusal to repent is only storing up retribution for yourself on that Day of retribution when God's just verdicts will be made known. He will repay everyone as their deeds deserve. For those who aimed for glory and honour and immortality by persevering in doing good, there will be eternal life; but for those who out of jealousy have taken for their guide not truth but injustice, there will be the fury of retribution. Trouble and distress will come to every human being who does evil - Jews first, but Greeks as well; glory and honour and peace will come to everyone who does good - Jews first, but Greeks as well. There is no favouritism with God.'

There are people who interpret this passage as if St. Paul is telling us that we can never pass judgment on what a person does. But this is not what he is referring to... Of course we must judge actions, discerning whether they correspond objectively to the revealed Will of God, or not. This we can and must do, both with our own actions and with those of others. If we did not do so, we would become completely disoriented and could go so far as to call evil good and good evil (cf. Is 5:20), as is in fact the case today.

But it is something different to condemn a person, i.e. to judge him. This is where what St. Paul tells us in this text applies. In the first instance, we must consider that we ourselves are not exempt from doing things contrary to God's will and that, unfortunately, we have already committed them in the past. We would do well, therefore, to remember how the Lord has dealt with us in His love.

It is essential to think of the goodness of God, who calls man to conversion. He does not want to leave a person in the perdition of sin, but does everything to turn him away from the ways of evil and error, so that he may live in the light of truth.

Let us leave the judgement of men in God's hands, and, for our part, let us pray for every person who lives in sin, that he may hear God's call to conversion and may

experience in Christ the forgiveness of his sins. It is also important to pray for those who live in God's grace, that they may remain in it and not stray from the way of salvation.

In the Letter to the Romans, the Apostle Paul speaks plainly. Anyone who closes himself off from the warning and gentle voice of the Lord, who calls him to conversion, is storing up "wrath" against himself, i.e. he will have to bear the consequences of such a life: *"For those who out of jealousy have taken for their guide not truth but injustice, there will be the fury of retribution. Trouble and distress will come to every human being who does evil"*.

In a world marked by relativism - which even considerably weakens the Church - it is necessary, for the sake of people, to call things by their name and not to give room for "grey areas". This should by no means be done in a harsh and hurtful manner. But neither should wrong attitudes and tendencies be overlooked.

As clearly as St. Paul points out the consequences of sin and unrighteousness, he also tells us what awaits us if we open ourselves to God's grace and cooperate with it: *"God (...) will repay everyone as their deeds deserve. For those who aimed for glory and honour and immortality by persevering in doing good, there will be eternal life (...) glory and honour and peace will come to everyone who does good"*.

Thus, day by day, despite our weakness, we can lay up treasures for heaven (cf. Mt 6:20). These are glorious and imperishable treasures, which we can already look forward to. At the same time, living in this way fills us with joy already here, in the time of our earthly life. On the one hand, it is the joy of our Heavenly Father himself, seeing that we are striving to live fruitfully in his vineyard. On the other hand, it is our joy at being able to live in union with God.

Every act of love performed in union with God spreads His light in this world and drives away darkness. The reverse is also true: with every sin that is committed, as long as one does not repent and receive forgiveness, the darkness spreads and the demons can increase their pernicious work.

So it is not only about our personal salvation and laying up treasures for our eternal life, but also about interceding with God for other people, especially for those who live in the darkness of sin. Every effort we make to achieve holiness benefits all people, and the Lord will also use it in that way.

Precisely in these times, when darkness is spreading both in the world and in the Church because of a tremendous anti-Christian influence, it is extremely important for us, the faithful, to be vigilant and to increase our efforts to courageously defend and witness to the authentic faith of the Church. With the light that emanates from a life in Christ, we are to counteract Lucifer's ever-increasing deceptions. We can ask the Lord to shorten this time of tribulation, and fight for the conversion of many people.

What immense joy and gratitude will fill us one day when we see that the Lord has also appreciated our service in driving away darkness and saving souls!

And please, let us not forget to pray daily for the dead. They are waiting for our prayers, and this loving service we render them will also increase our treasure in heaven and benefit the Kingdom of God.