

23. October 2021

Life according to the Spirit

Rom 8:1-11

'Thus, condemnation will never come to those who are in Christ Jesus, because the law of the Spirit which gives life in Christ Jesus has set you free from the law of sin and death. What the Law could not do because of the weakness of human nature, God did, sending his own Son in the same human nature as any sinner to be a sacrifice for sin, and condemning sin in that human nature. This was so that the Law's requirements might be fully satisfied in us as we direct our lives not by our natural inclinations but by the Spirit. Those who are living by their natural inclinations have their minds on the things human nature desires; those who live in the Spirit have their minds on spiritual things. And human nature has nothing to look forward to but death, while the Spirit looks forward to life and peace, because the outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God, since it does not submit to God's Law, and indeed it cannot, and those who live by their natural inclinations can never be pleasing to God. You, however, live not by your natural inclinations, but by the Spirit, since the Spirit of God has made a home in you. Indeed, anyone who does not have the Spirit of Christ does not belong to him. But when Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin but the spirit is alive because you have been justified; and if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead has made his home in you, then he who raised Christ Jesus from the dead will give life to your own mortal bodies through his Spirit living in you.'

The biblical texts of the last days have shown us the seriousness of the struggle against sin; a struggle that no one can evade, if he or she wants to seriously walk the path of following Christ. There is even a passage in the Letter to the Hebrews in which we are told that we have not yet resisted in our struggle against sin to the point of shedding blood (Heb 12:4).

So, it is necessary to make a total renunciation of sin, without relativising it, without downplaying its seriousness, without playing with it... To prefer to die rather than to live consciously in mortal sin! That is how far the decision can go!

Both the reading and today's Gospel insist on this. *"The outlook of disordered human nature is opposed to God"...* We should listen to the words of Sacred Scripture and the authentic Magisterium of the Church, and not listen to those voices that want to justify and relativise everything! The latter position is by no means true love, because by minimising such wrong attitudes, the eternal salvation of the person is not in view, but the tendencies of the flesh, which lead to death, are encouraged.

Even today's gospel is very clear (Lk 13:1-9)! Whoever does not convert is in danger of perishing.

The situation is different when, in spite of having made a real decision to avoid sin, we have been weak. Then God will meet us with His mercy and lift us up. There is no doubt about it!

Today's texts tell us what we are to do in the face of this inner struggle between the flesh and the spirit: Live according to the Spirit of God! *"When Christ is in you, the body is dead because of sin, but the spirit is alive because of the justification it has received."*

And also the gospel gives us a guideline:

"Then he said to the vinedresser, 'You see, three years I have been coming to look for fruit on this fig tree, and I cannot find it. But the vinedresser answered, 'Lord, leave it alone this year; I will dig around it and put manure on it, and see if it will bear fruit. If not, cut it down.'"

Anyone who listens to these meditations daily may notice that reference is made here to a theme about which I have spoken on other occasions; namely, that one can repair what one has done wrong and make up for what one has wasted. In the context of today's gospel, we can see it in the serious danger that, by failing to do so, one might be failing one's purpose.

So it is life according to the Spirit of the Lord, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, that can produce those fruits that the vinedresser in today's parable wants to find on his fig tree....

At this point, let us return to yesterday's theme, in which we saw how important it is, for example, to restrain anger. As its opposite, we find meekness, one of the fruits of the Spirit, which makes a person self-controlled and brings inner peace.

Meekness has the task of taming and appeasing all disorderly movements of the passions, making the soul capable of self-control and remaining calm even in the face of difficult and provocative circumstances.

Meekness is not only important in dealing with other people; it is also important for the life of prayer and unification with God.

"God is not to be found in the whirlwind of irritation, but only in inner peace and serenity. If the soul is affected by feelings of anger, even a little, it cannot perceive the gentle impulses of grace, nor the quiet whisper of God's voice. The din of the passions prevents it from giving ear to the inner Master, and so it loses its guide and no longer acts according to God's pleasure; but is carried away by the whims of its

impulsiveness, which will lead it astray". (Fr. Gabriel of St. Mary Magdalene O.C.D., *Divine Intimacy*, Vol. III: *Meekness*)

Let us aspire to the life of the Spirit, to remain rooted in the Lord!

As for anger, there is also the so-called "holy anger", which we see, for example, when the Lord purifies the Temple (cf. Jn 2:13-22). But while this holy wrath exists, we should not immediately appeal to it to justify our own wrath.

We can join in this prayer of the venerable Luis De La Puente:

"As soon as I perceive anger flaring up in me, I want to gather my strength, not with vehemence, but with meekness; not with violence, but with gentleness. I want to try to restore peace in my heart. But, since I know well that I alone am not capable of it, I want to invoke Your help, just as the apostles came to You in the midst of the storm, tossed about by the raging waters."