



24. October 2021

God is our hope

Jer 31:7-9

For Yahweh says this: Shout with joy for Jacob! Hail the chief of nations! Proclaim! Praise! Shout, 'Yahweh has saved his people, the remnant of Israel!' Watch, I shall bring them back from the land of the north and gather them in from the far ends of the earth. With them, the blind and the lame, women with child, women in labour, all together: a mighty throng will return here! In tears they will return, in prayer I shall lead them. I shall guide them to streams of water, by a smooth path where they will not stumble. For I am a father to Israel, and Ephraim is my first-born son.

Whoever reads the Book of Jeremiah will witness God's constant striving for His people and how they often turn away from God's instructions, including their kings. So the Israelites had to bear the consequences.

The text of comfort we have heard today shows us what the true intention of the "Father of Israel" is. He wants salvation for men, not disgrace! It is they themselves who bring misfortune upon themselves because of their disobedience, their transgression of God's commandments, their idolatry.

It could be said that God is still behind His children, even though they offend Him with sin. This is reflected in the Prophet Jeremiah, who was sent by God to comfort His people, even though they have become apostate.

In this context, I would like to recommend a book, which illustrates the story of the Prophet Jeremiah in the form of a novel. The author is Franz Werfel and the book is entitled "Hearken Unto the Voice" or "Jeremiah".

This pattern is repeated throughout the whole of God's history with mankind, right up to the present day. Our Heavenly Father wants to shower men with benefits, to share His riches with them, and to live for all eternity in perfect fellowship with them. But we men, in our folly, often reject this love, choose our own ways, go astray and in many ways fall into the hands of bandits, having been seduced by the powers of Evil.

However, God never ceases to call us and invite us to return to Him. But if we close our eyes and ears, God allows us to suffer the consequences of our actions, so that perhaps we will wake up and return to Him, like the prodigal son (Lk 15:11-32)! When he returned, he discovered that his father had been waiting for him with longing, and when he saw him, he "clasped him in his arms and kissed him" (v. 20b).

This is also true today, and I think we can apply it very well to the "plague" we are currently experiencing. Many people are going astray because they are not obeying God's commandments. Governments are going terribly astray. The culture of death - or, rather, satanic attempts on the lives of men - are spreading. Even the Church, in its leaders, is not showing itself to be that rock that withstands the storms; but is adapting to the spirit of the world and even co-operating with it.

So God allows a plague to lead people to the essential, to Him. It is a call for conversion, for people to order their lives before the Lord and not to defile themselves with idols of various kinds. If this happens, these wonderful words from today's reading also count for us: *"I shall guide them to streams of water, by a smooth path where they will not stumble."*

If we look at ourselves, we men, we might sometimes lose hope. How often God's love is rejected: every day, every hour, again and again! It is a tragedy! Often even reproofs are not enough; we easily fall victim again to our evil inclinations.

But in this "valley of tears" an infinitely great light falls: it is the love of our Heavenly Father! This light surpasses all darkness.

In the face of Israel's unfaithfulness, in the face of humanity's unfaithfulness - although there was always a faithful remnant, even if it was only one person - God's love shines even more brightly. In the sacrifice of the Cross of the Son of God, He surpasses all, showing us the extent of His love. That is why there is hope, even in these dark days of a Corona-confused world. God is our hope! If we are willing, He will lead us through this darkness, bring us back home and shelter us in His Heart. There we will find our home forever!