

2. January 2022

## The richness and glory of our heritage

Ef 1:3-6,15-18

***Blessed be God the Father of our Lord Jesus Christ, who has blessed us with all the spiritual blessings of heaven in Christ. Thus he chose us in Christ before the world was made to be holy and faultless before him in love, marking us out for himself beforehand, to be adopted sons, through Jesus Christ. Such was his purpose and good pleasure, to the praise of the glory of his grace, his free gift to us in the Beloved. That is why I, having once heard about your faith in the Lord Jesus, and your love for all God's holy people, have never failed to thank God for you and to remember you in my prayers. May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people.***

Having concluded the series of meditations on the O Antiphons and those that accompanied us during the Octave of Christmas, we now return to the usual framework of biblical reflections, following the readings according to the liturgical cycle. On this Second Sunday after Christmas, we have as our second reading this passage from the Letter to the Ephesians, from which I would like to highlight especially the last part:

*"May the God of our Lord Jesus Christ, the Father of glory, give you a spirit of wisdom and perception of what is revealed, to bring you to full knowledge of him. May he enlighten the eyes of your mind so that you can see what hope his call holds for you, how rich is the glory of the heritage he offers among his holy people."*

Those who follow my daily meditations and conferences, know that during this year I want to put a special emphasis on evangelisation; that is, on the proclamation of the faith. On the second day of the Christmas Octave, we even "seal a covenant" with the holy angels - so to speak - to set out together with them once again and, in every possible way, to bring to men the most precious thing we can offer them: the Gospel.

Today's reading is of great help to us, for it brings to mind something that is in danger of being increasingly forgotten, namely the richness and glory of the inheritance given to us in Christ.

This is the key to the proclamation, for if I myself am no longer so convinced of our Catholic heritage, I will hardly be able to win other people over by showing them the beauty and value of our faith. It could easily happen that I would then no longer be aware of the incomparability of following Christ, especially when, for the sake of a

misunderstood ecumenism or an interreligious dialogue without clear contours, the differences are blurred and obviated, putting the various religions on the same level.

Paul is leading us on a different way, which we must continue to follow even in our own times. I would therefore like to refer first of all to the Tradition of our Church. If we fail to honour it, how can we show the richness of our Church? This applies especially to the Liturgy, and in particular to the Holy Mass as such.

Considered from the point of view of the richness and value of our heritage, it is totally incomprehensible that attacks on the ancient and venerable rites of our Church are coming from Rome. It is as if we were cutting off our own roots; as if the Church has only really begun since the Second Vatican Council. This is a totally erroneous view! On the contrary, many malformations and wrong tendencies emerged after this Council, which were justified with the "spirit of the Council". Liturgical experiments of all kinds led to a loss of transcendence, to a lack of vocations, to a worldliness of the Church, under which we now suffer. For a true renewal of the Church, it will be necessary to overcome all that has been diverted in another direction, and to draw on the true treasures of the Church.

It is certainly legitimate to raise the question of how this treasure of the Church can be brought to the people of our time; how it can best be passed on to them, especially when Catholic formation and identity has diminished or has not yet taken place among the people. However, the answer to this questioning can never be to adopt or "borrow" the spirit of the world, nor to undermine the beauty of the faith and its concrete expression, nor to diminish the transcendental dimension of our faith, nor to put too much emphasis on concern for the advancement of earthly realities.

Only by paying more attention to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and recognising even more finely what God has already given us, can we be instruments in which God can play his song of love.

That is why today, at the beginning of this new year, in which we pray especially for the conversion of mankind, we must keep this message in mind: Let us make greater use of what God has already worked in His Church! Let us make it visible and tangible for people, both in liturgy and in the proclamation of the Word, in the mystical and ascetical dimension, in art and sacred music, in the lives of the saints, and in so many other treasures that have been gathered in the ark of the Church. But above all, we must awaken in ourselves the love for God, who illumines everything and gives us the wisdom to see everything in his light: "*By your light we see the light.*" (Ps 36:9).

Let us not allow our Holy Church to be transformed into a kind of pious NGO, which is mainly concerned with earthly affairs, which becomes a part of the world. If this were to happen, the Church would lose her strength, and the Lord, when He returns, might "spew her out of His mouth" because of her lukewarmness (Rev 3:16).

If at the same time we are open and expectant for the new impulses that the Holy Spirit may work, these can never be in contradiction with all the precious treasures that the Lord has already entrusted to us; rather they must be a deeper unfolding and discovery of what we have received from Him.