

12. January 2022

Prayer and inner cell

Mk 1:29-39

And at once on leaving the synagogue, he went with James and John straight to the house of Simon and Andrew. Now Simon's mother-in-law was in bed and feverish, and at once they told him about her. He went in to her, took her by the hand and helped her up. And the fever left her and she began to serve them. That evening, after sunset, they brought to him all who were sick and those who were possessed by devils. The whole town came crowding round the door, and he cured many who were sick with diseases of one kind or another; he also drove out many devils, but he would not allow them to speak, because they knew who he was. In the morning, long before dawn, he got up and left the house and went off to a lonely place and prayed there. Simon and his companions set out in search of him, and when they found him they said, 'Everybody is looking for you.' He answered, 'Let us go elsewhere, to the neighbouring country towns, so that I can proclaim the message there too, because that is why I came.' And he went all through Galilee, preaching in their synagogues and driving out devils.

In view of the current crisis, I would like to return to the subject of the "inner cell", which I consider to be of the utmost importance, especially in times like these, and I would like to encourage all the faithful to cultivate this space for worshipping God in their own hearts! This is not only in order to counteract possible restrictions and trivialisation of worship on the external level; it is also enormously fruitful for the deepening of our spiritual life. Therefore, I will repeat today the meditation I wrote last year for this day's gospel.

Solitude and prayer in the early morning, when the night takes its exit, are set before us today by Jesus! When these two moments come together, one can usually come to understand God much more easily and also differently!

The virginity of the morning and the silence are among the most beautiful moments of intimate life with God! In order to cultivate this intimacy of relationship with His heavenly Father, the Lord withdraws and then again respond to the call to bring the Gospel to the people! In doing so, he sets a clear example to all those who feel called to share the Gospel in one way or another!

The first thing is to seek God in prayer, and those who can are advised to try it in the early hours of the morning when the world has not yet run its full course! The inner dialogue with the Father, the receptivity to the Holy Spirit, the inner strengthening and consolation through His presence and especially the light we need to share the Gospel in His Spirit, all this we receive more in silence than in the noise that surrounds us!

About the value of silence, Cardinal Sarah's book "The Power of Silence" quotes Dom Augustin Guillerand: *"What people possess within themselves, they find nowhere else! If silence does not live in man and if solitude is not a state in which man can be formed, the creature lives without God! There is no place in the world where God is more present than in the heart of man. This heart is truly the dwelling place of God, a temple of silence!"*

In "The Message of the Father" to Mother Eugenia Ravasio, which I have often mentioned, we hear in one word from God the Father:

"I would also like your superiors to allow you to use your free time to converse with me, and that you may console and love me for half an hour every day (...). You will be happy to speak little to creatures and in the secret of your heart you will speak to me and listen to me even when you are among them."

This inner communion with God is essential and it would be very fruitful if a kind of inner cell of worship of God were to develop in the believer's own heart. I draw attention to this point not only because it deepens the inner life, but also for topical reasons.

One cannot exclude the possibility that the present reduced church life will experience even more restrictions and be subject to increasing state control. In the struggle against the present crisis, we are confronted with developments that probably no one could have imagined before.

What happens when the church life to which we have been accustomed comes to a virtual standstill? We know from history the repeated attempts to wipe out Christianity or to use it in the service of one's own political-ideological goals. The same force that wants to achieve this is still at work with the same intention. Therefore, it is necessary to equip oneself to be able to withdraw into the inner space of the heart when the outer cult is restricted.

Therefore, I strongly advise to let this inner cell of worship develop in us, in order to be able to worship the Lord also in our own heart. Even if worship would come to a virtual standstill if Christian gatherings were no longer allowed: No one can forbid the worship of the Triune God in one's own heart. We can always withdraw and live there the intimate relationship with the Lord, to receive from it and thus overcome the challenges. This fortifies our inner castle and we can better face further storms.