

**28. January 2022**

**In praise of wisdom**

**Wis 7:7-10.15-16**

**Reading for the memorial of St. Thomas Aquinas**

*And so I prayed, and understanding was given me; I entreated, and the spirit of Wisdom came to me. I esteemed her more than sceptres and thrones; compared with her, I held riches as nothing. I reckoned no precious stone to be her equal, for compared with her, all gold is a pinch of sand, and beside her, silver ranks as mud. I loved her more than health or beauty, preferred her to the light, since her radiance never sleeps. May God grant me to speak as he would wish and conceive thoughts worthy of the gifts I have received, since he is both guide to Wisdom and director of sages; for we are in his hand, yes, ourselves and our sayings, and all intellectual and all practical knowledge.*

The greatest of the gifts of the Holy Spirit is that of wisdom. It is also referred to as "savory wisdom". It is not so much knowledge about natural things - however valuable they may be - nor is it experience on a practical level. Nor is the gift of wisdom a developed intellectual knowledge, however good it may be. Rather, it is the direct communication of the Holy Spirit; it is seeing with the eyes of God in a supernatural light. This is why we speak of a "savory knowledge", related to the words of the psalm often applied to the Eucharist: "*Taste and see how good the Lord is*" (Ps 34:8). This "savouring" is a spiritual delight in God Himself, and the soul is ecstatic at the divine wisdom and at the fact that He has communicated this wisdom to it.

This is why today's reading never tires of praising wisdom, for the one who has tasted it only once can no longer equate it with anything else. Because he has encountered God himself, and having experienced him directly, can he compare him with anyone else? Here it is no longer a question of an indirect encounter with God through His creatures, but of seeing God in His own light. And this light is brighter than a thousand suns, and "*since her radiance never sleeps*" - as the text says.

Now, how to attain this wisdom?

In the first instance, we should have a longing to know God more deeply, and not be content to know something about Him and otherwise continue with a life focused on the natural. The one who loves wants to know the beloved!

The text speaks of supplication and invocation... This is supplicatory prayer!

A supplicatory prayer is an existential prayer, in which we put our whole heart; a prayer in which we immerse ourselves completely; a prayer that embraces our whole person. Perhaps we have experienced it in situations of extreme need or when we have feared for another person. Also when people who love each other are separated or in great inner need, they often turn existentially to the Lord.

Such prayers go all the way to the Throne of the Holy Trinity and overcome every obstacle, because the deepest part of the person is directed to God and their hope is placed in His help.

If the Lord Himself has put in us the spirit of supplication (cf. Rom.8,26b), could such a prayer, when it asks for what is right, go unheeded? In a way, we could say that it is a prayer in which, so to speak, one puts everything on the line and surrenders oneself before God.

So, if a soul begs to be granted wisdom - as the reading says - it is imploring God for the highest good; it is imploring Him to make Himself more deeply known to it?

On the path of following Christ, as we heed the promptings of the Holy Spirit, God grants us more and more wisdom. In this way, this gift can unfold and increase progressively in our spiritual life.

There is one more phrase from this text that is worth highlighting: *"May God grant me to speak as he would wish and conceive thoughts worthy of the gifts I have received"*.

This quotation can very well be applied to other situations. It is not just a matter of receiving God's gifts, but of using them in God's wisdom, i.e. as worthy of those gifts.

Let us think, for example, of the transmission of the Gospel. It would be paradoxical if we were to proclaim the message in an aggressive and impatient manner. It is clear that the Good News must be passed on in the same spirit in which the Lord entrusted it to us. This requires an inner formation; or, in other words, the Holy Spirit must make us more and more like Him, so that in evangelisation He is the protagonist and our shortcomings do not hinder His work too much.

So the Spirit not only bestows the gifts, but also teaches us how to use them according to their uniqueness and value. Therefore, let us ask the Lord that we may know how to use the gifts He has given us in His Spirit, both those of the natural and supernatural order, because having received them does not automatically mean that we use them appropriately.

