

10. February 2020

## Observe admonitions

1 Kgs 11:4-13

*When Solomon grew old his wives swayed his heart to other gods; and his heart was not wholly with Yahweh his God as his father David's had been. Solomon became a follower of Astarte, the goddess of the Sidonians, and of Milcom, the Ammonite abomination. He did what was displeasing to Yahweh, and was not a wholehearted follower of Yahweh, as his father David had been. Then it was that Solomon built a high place for Chemosh, the abomination of Moab, on the mountain to the east of Jerusalem, and to Milcom, the abomination of the Ammonites. He did the same for all his foreign wives, who offered incense and sacrifice to their gods. Yahweh was angry with Solomon because his heart had turned away from Yahweh, God of Israel, who had twice appeared to him and had forbidden him to follow other gods; but he did not carry out Yahweh's order. Yahweh therefore said to Solomon, 'Since you have behaved like this and have not kept my covenant or the laws which I laid down for you, I shall tear the kingdom away from you and give it to one of your servants. For your father David's sake, however, I shall not do this during your lifetime, but shall tear it out of your son's hands. Even so, I shall not tear the whole kingdom from him. For the sake of my servant David, and for the sake of Jerusalem which I have chosen, I shall leave your son one tribe.'*

Holy Scripture also shows us the weak side of Solomon, so praised for his wisdom. To this day we can profit from the wonderful thoughts and prayers of this king, which are contained in the biblical book of Wisdom. The queen of Sheba was deeply impressed by Solomon's wisdom and splendour (1 Kgs 10:1-13). But today's reading shows us that he had a weak side and did not know how to resist certain temptations.

This is a warning to us never to be too sure of ourselves. While we can rely firmly on God's love and mercy; we must handle our own weaknesses with realism, remaining vigilant and guarding against any recklessness.

What was it that moved Solomon to honour foreign gods, even though it had been expressly forbidden to him and all the people (Deut 5:7)? The snare was attachment to his wives! He probably would not, of his own account, have turned to other gods. It was his foreign wives who brought from their respective nations the worship of strange gods. And Solomon, out of love for them, or rather, out of inordinate

attachment to them, forgot the warnings the Lord had given him and wanted to please his wives.

This is an important lesson from Holy Scripture! In our human relationships, we must not allow ourselves to be carried away by our feelings to the point of falling into attachments, which endanger our spiritual life and weaken our judgement.

How easily temptations arise when we treat people with too much trust, without keeping the distance that corresponds to each type of relationship!

Especially in the relationship between man and woman we have to be very careful, because the force of attraction is strong and feelings are easily involved.

To avoid misunderstandings, I clarify that human relationships are a gift and are important, as they reflect God's relationship with us and even the communion within the Holy Trinity. But in order to keep them in order, a clear basis is needed, which we often do not take sufficiently into account. The consequences of this can be dramatic, even traumatic.

The Lord's commandments and the directives that flow from them are the guidelines that must be followed in order to live in true freedom. Our deepest bond must be with the Lord! To Him we can open all our depths with unconditional trust.

If the deepest longing of our heart is answered by God's love, then from this relationship all other human relationships can be ordered and given their rightful place in God's order. Thus, they can bring happiness.

On the other hand, when relationships no longer breathe true freedom, because of passions or disordered attachments, they become burdensome and, in certain circumstances, may even lead to the transgression of the divine commandments.

Let us keep King Solomon in honourable memory with his wisdom; but let us also take his lapses as a warning, so that we may be watchful over our spiritual life and order it according to the Spirit of God.