

8. April 2022

## God sees the bowels and the heart

Jer 20:10-13

*I heard so many disparaging me, 'Terror on every side! Denounce him! Let us denounce him!' All those who were on good terms with me watched for my downfall, 'Perhaps he will be seduced into error. Then we shall get the better of him and take our revenge!' But Yahweh is at my side like a mighty hero; my opponents will stumble, vanquished, confounded by their failure; everlasting, unforgettable disgrace will be theirs. Yahweh Sabaoth, you who test the upright, observer of motives and thoughts, I shall see your vengeance on them, for I have revealed my cause to you. Sing to Yahweh, praise Yahweh, for he has delivered the soul of one in need from the clutches of evil doers.*

In these days we listen again to the prophet Jeremiah, who, despite the enemies around him, does not lose confidence in God, because he knows that God's justice will prevail in all things.

The prophet's enemies are also God's enemies, for the prophet is merely fulfilling the Lord's mission. Therefore Jeremiah does not seek vengeance on his own; he leaves it to God to act on his adversaries: *"For I have revealed my cause to you."*

God sees the bowels and the heart... By this expression, it is meant to imply that He knows all the motivations that lead to an action. No one can deceive God; before Him everything is unveiled.

This should serve as a warning to those who oppose God, so that they do not rush blindly into their own misfortune, but remember that there is a righteous Judge and, at least out of fear of God, turn away from the path of wickedness.

But those who want to serve God should not be frightened by this statement that *"God sees the heart and the bowels"*, for in this case it expresses the certainty that there is nothing hidden from the eyes of the Lord, that everything is written in His book (cf. Ps 139:16b), that He forgets nothing... This reminds us of that word that St Benedict addressed to his monks, exhorting them to do everything conscious of the presence of God.

If we live in this awareness, we will be able to observe the course of events with confidence and serenity. If we are wrongly accused, we leave our defence in God's hands; unless it is necessary to clarify things in order to prevent others from being confused. What is essential is that we ourselves have a clear conscience before God and can look upon His face. That is enough!

The righteous person is put to the test, for his faith and faithfulness must be able to stand firm.

But there is also another aspect that we can consider in relation to our spiritual life. Sometimes God allows situations that give the righteous the opportunity to show his love and to be purified more deeply. This can happen, for example, in a situation of persecution.

The teachers of the spiritual life tell us that, on the path of following Christ, purification is not only required in the external but also in the internal senses. While in so-called "active purification" we restrain ourselves, with God's help, from becoming slaves to our passions, in "passive purification" it is God Himself who comes to our aid, to cleanse us of those deeper spiritual problems.

Take, for example, someone who enjoys being praised and taken notice of by people, thereby increasing his pride and false self-esteem. While receiving all these expressions of consideration, he easily forgets that every perfect gift comes from God (Jas 1:17), and is in danger of seeing himself as the centre of attention. However, he does not realise this at all.

However, God can allow those people who admired him to suddenly begin to speak ill of him, or even to turn against him, perhaps because of misunderstandings or other causes that cannot be fixed. In this situation, this person is called to dismantle his pride and to place himself totally in God's hands. Even if the reasons for the rejection were unjust, God uses this circumstance to heal the spiritual disease of pride. The person concerned should not even make an effort to clarify the situation, because this would probably only serve to raise up the wounded pride again. He must leave everything in God's hands, while he himself must allow himself to be purified in the school of humility.

God knows how to turn everything to good, if we abandon ourselves totally to Him, if we commit our cause to Him, as Jeremiah did. The less we hinder His work, the more God's will can be fulfilled, even in difficult situations. We are therefore called to join in

the last exclamation of today's reading: *"Sing to Yahweh, praise Yahweh, for he has delivered the soul of one in need from the clutches of evil doers"*.