

17. June 2022

The consequences of sin

2 Kgs 11:1-4.9-18.20

When Athaliah mother of Ahaziah learned that her son was dead, she promptly murdered all those of royal stock. But Jehosheba, daughter of King Jehoram and sister of Ahaziah, surreptitiously rescued Jehoash son of Ahaziah from among the princes who were to be murdered, and put him with his nurse in the sleeping quarters; in this way she hid him from Athaliah, and he was not killed. He stayed, hidden with her in the Temple of Yahweh for six years, while Athaliah governed the country. In the seventh year, Jehoiada sent for the regimental commanders of the Carians and the guards, and had them brought to him in the Temple of Yahweh. He made a pact with them, put them on oath, then showed them the king's son. He gave them this order. The regimental commanders did everything as Jehoiada the priest had ordered, and each one brought his men, those coming on duty on the Sabbath and those going off duty on the Sabbath, and reported to Jehoiada the priest. The priest then issued the regimental commanders with King David's spears and shields, which were kept in the Temple of Yahweh. The guards then took position, each man with his weapons in his hand, from the south corner of the Temple to the north corner of the Temple, all round the altar and the Temple. Then Jehoiada brought the king's son out - crowned him and gave him a copy of the covenant; and they made him king and anointed him, and they clapped their hands and shouted, 'Long live the king!' On hearing the people shouting, Athaliah joined the people in the Temple of Yahweh. When she looked, there stood the king on a dais, as the custom was, with the officers and trumpeters at the king's side, and all the people of the country rejoicing and blowing the trumpets; then Athaliah tore her clothes and shouted, 'Treason, treason!' Jehoiada the priest then gave the orders to the commanders in charge of the troops, 'Take her out under guard and put to death anyone who follows her.' 'For', the priest had already said, 'she must not be killed inside the Temple of Yahweh. 'They seized her, and when she reached the horses' entry to the palace, she was killed there. Jehoiada made a covenant between Yahweh, the king and the people that they would remain Yahweh's people; and another one between the king and the people. All the people of the country then went to the temple of Baal and demolished it; they smashed its altars and its images and killed Mattan the priest of Baal in front of the altars. The priest made arrangements for the

security of the Temple of Yahweh. All the people of the country were delighted; the city, however, made no move. And Athaliah was put to death inside the palace.

What are the lessons we can learn from this biblical passage? Sadly, Israel's history is often full of violence, which is always the consequence of having turned away from God and then embarked on the paths of iniquity.

This is precisely the message that is still valid today! Turning away from God and apostasy have consequences: evil grows and, if there is no conversion, it brings forth fruits of calamity and misfortune.

We saw this a few days ago in the story of King Ahab, who was only spared the full consequences of his evil deeds because he had done penance.

In the later course of Israel's history, Athaliah, the daughter of Ahab and Jezebel, came to power and became the murderer of the royal family. In that sense, she herself had set her own destiny and ended up being put to the sword, as today's reading tells the story at the end.

Now, the people wanted to return to worshipping the true God. So they destroyed the temple of Baal and "All the people of the country were delighted". Today we live in the time after the coming of the Saviour; the time when the Gospel is to be carried to the ends of the earth. All men are called to convert and turn to God. Through repentance and God's forgiveness, man can be saved from even the gravest faults. The incomparable message of God's love manifested in Jesus restores hope to the world, as long as the world does not close itself off from the light.

In no way can it be believed that the gravity of guilt today is less than it was in the times of the Old Covenant. God's commandments are still being transgressed and the doors are still being opened to evil. Rather, it could be said that, thanks to the great light God has given the world by sending His Son, the seriousness and also the absurdity of sin should be recognised much more clearly. The infinite mercy of God should also be experienced even more deeply.

In our days, we are facing the plague of a viral disease which has been called a "pandemic" and which has affected almost the entire world population. Severe

protective measures have been imposed to prevent the spread of the virus. From mandatory use of masks and constant testing, to worldwide vaccination campaigns, to rigorous confinements that have considerably weakened the economy, a bizarre scenario has emerged. Without going into details here about the real threat of this virus and the proper way to counter it, we, as people of faith, can and should ask ourselves why God allowed such a plague.

Anyone who knows my position will know that I see a connection between this plague and the gross violation of God's commandments. Among the many terrible sins committed against God throughout the world, abortion is not the only one, but the greatest evil. If the grave sins of King Ahab and his daughter Athaliah brought such consequences, is it any wonder that today God is making us see the consequences of the mass murder of innocent children? If the kings of Israel had to give an account to God for their apostasy and the bad example they set to the people, what about today's politicians who even promote abortion, thus reinforcing a kind of Moloch worship?

There is only one way out of this spiral of death: a true conversion to God, the fulfilment of his Law and the acceptance of the grace of the Lord, who wants to forgive us. Everything else is an illusion! We will not be able to build a better and fraternal world if we do not stop sinning against God and thus escape the Devil's traps. And if we are already on God's path, we must deepen our conversion and humbly offer it to the Lord, also in reparation for the many offences against Him and His love.

Let us imagine for a moment that the terrible slaughter of the most innocent would cease... Heavy, dark clouds would then dissipate from this world. What joy would fill the whole universe, heaven and earth!