

6. July 2022

God is the home of our heart

Hos 10:1-3,7-8,12

Israel was a luxuriant vine yielding plenty of fruit. The more his fruit increased, the more altars he built; the richer his land became, the richer he made the sacred pillars. Theirs is a divided heart; now they will have to pay for it. He himself will hack down their altars and wreck their sacred pillars. Then they will say, 'We have no king because we have not feared Yahweh, but what could the king do for us?' Samaria has had her day. Her king is like a straw drifting on the water. The high places of Aven, the sin of Israel, will be destroyed; thorns and thistles will grow over their altars. Then they will say to the mountains, 'Cover us!' and to the hills, 'Fall on us!' Sow saving justice for yourselves, reap a harvest of faithful love; break up your fallow ground: it is time to seek out Yahweh until he comes to rain saving justice down on you.

Again today we meet the apostate people, whose heart has turned away from the Lord. They let themselves be seduced by riches, abundant harvests and all the treasures that God had deposited on earth and blessed for the good of men.

Indeed, material riches are a danger to people, if they do not handle them properly. They provide a false security, a feeling of having a special quality of life, which easily leads to relegating God to second place. For this reason, Sacred Scripture warns us against attachment to riches: "*However much wealth may multiply, do not set your heart on it*" (Ps 62:11b).

The beauty of earthly things and of persons can also confuse our senses. Instead of considering it as a gift from God and thanking Him for it, it becomes our primary concern. As far as physical appearance is concerned, one then falls into vanity, giving too much importance to one's own person or to another.

In this context, one of the seven gifts of the Holy Spirit is extremely important: the gift of knowledge. It enables us to recognize clearly that creatures, whoever they may be, are nothing in themselves. When the gift of knowledge unfolds its efficacy in us, it teaches

us that everything proceeds from the goodness and beauty of God, so that we do not cling inordinately our hearts to transient goods of all kinds.

What is at stake is our heart, which is not to be divided, as the prophet Hosea makes the people of Israel see in this passage. In fact, it is a great paradox that, on the one hand, we ask God for everything and receive it from Him, and then we forget the Giver of goods, we appropriate things and, in the worst case, we turn them into idols. God unmasks them, saying: *"They have idols of silver and gold, made by human hands"* (Ps 115:4). We must not worship the "work of men's hands"!

However, there is always the possibility of conversion, as God offers it to the people in today's text: to sow justice, to turn to the Lord and to go in search of him.

It is thanks to God's infinite mercy that man receives again and again a new opportunity to leave behind the life of sin and confusion and turn to the Lord. Then, with God's help, man learns to turn his heart away from everything that displeases the Lord, to free it from all attachments and to untie all the chains that result from this.

By sincerely turning to God, conversion takes place. And from the moment it is experienced, this conversion must be put into practice day after day, until our heart belongs entirely to God, because only in Him is our true home.

Those who still seek their "home" and their security in Creation and in other people have not yet understood this. The love of people is a wonderful gift, but it cannot be our final "home". The reality of death teaches us this lesson, for we face it alone and for the believer it represents the definitive return home.