

16. August 2022

Satanic pride

Ez 28:1-10

The word of Yahweh was addressed to me as follows, 'Son of man, say to the ruler of Tyre, "The Lord Yahweh says this: Because your heart has grown proud, you thought: I am a god; I am divinely enthroned far out to sea. Though you are human, not divine, you have allowed yourself to think like God. So, you are wiser than Daniel; no sage as wise as you! By your wisdom and your intelligence you have made yourself a fortune, you have put gold and silver into your treasuries. Such is your skill in trading, your fortune has continued to increase, and your fortune has made your heart grow prouder. "And so, the Lord Yahweh says this: Since you have allowed yourself to think like God, very well, I am going to bring foreigners against you, the most barbarous of the nations. They will draw sword against your fine wisdom, they will desecrate your splendour, they will throw you down into the grave and you will die a violent death far out to sea. Will you still think: I am a god, when your slaughterers confront you? But you will be human, not divine, in the clutches of the ones who strike you down! You will die like the uncircumcised at the hand of foreigners. "For I have spoken - declares the Lord Yahweh." '

Presumption is a very serious term, which is applied in today's reading to describe the prince of Tyre. This passage of Scripture is also used to refer to the fall of Lucifer, who ends up being cast out of heaven by God through the Archangel Michael. While those angels who remained faithful to God find their joy in serving Him, without self-exaltation in any way, the "Prince of this world" aspires to power and glory which he seeks to obtain from himself.

This is the theme of today's reading!

Pride and presumption are very difficult to overcome when they have taken root in the heart and are constantly nourished. In today's text, we encounter "satanic pride", which seeks to appropriate a dignity that belongs to God alone. *"Your heart has grown proud, you thought: I am a god; I am divinely enthroned far out to sea. Though you are human, not divine, you have allowed yourself to think like God."*

It is evident that the prince of Tyre - and what is said of him we apply to Lucifer - was intoxicated with the gifts he had received and acquired. These had blinded him to the point of making him incapable of seeing reality. "*You are human, not divine*" and, applied to Lucifer, it would mean, "You are only a creature."

Getting drunk on one's own power, possessions, beauty, knowledge, one's own intellect, social position, office, various talents, etc., leads to blindness, because the gaze is centred on one's self and not on the other. These had blinded him to the point of making him incapable of seeing reality.

Thus an image of one's supposed greatness arises, and the more this image is cultivated or receives approval from others, the more pride will proliferate, which in the case of Lucifer goes so far as to want to overthrow God from his throne, in order to put himself in his place. In these circumstances, it easily comes to the abuse of power, because pride does not want to accept anyone's superiority, does not want to obey anyone, does not want to be accountable to anyone... Thus, it uses everything to build up and satisfy its own thirst for power, and pride becomes excessive. This immoderation comes from the fact that satanic pride, in its delirium, believes that God's omnipotence consists in accumulating all possible power; and this is what it wants to imitate.

Throughout history, there have been such power-obsessed figures: from Roman emperors to communist and fascist leaders, who, in their arrogance and presumption, had no scruples about paying with countless human lives for their ambition for power. In them we can recognise "antichrists", forerunners of the "Antichrist" who is to appear at the end of time, wanting to claim for himself the honour that only God deserves. In this last Antichrist, Satan's evil will reach its highest expression on the human level.

What a tremendous contrast to the humility of the Son of God who, though the Son of the Almighty, came to serve and to give his life as a ransom for many (Mk 10:45)!

But pride is not always as evident as it is described here. It can also manifest itself subtly, and it is always at work when one tries to dethrone God in order to put oneself in his place. This does not necessarily always happen consciously, but it does happen when we put our own "self" in the foreground and do not see ourselves as mere stewards and

servants of the goods entrusted to us. Unfortunately, this is not infrequently the case. Therefore, the heart must be very attentive to any manifestation of hidden pride.

Apart from satanic pride, there are also other forms of pride that often serve as self-protection. These are those forms of pride that have been built up, for example, as a result of various complexes, such as inferiority complexes. This can become so strong that any criticism, and anything that appears to be criticism, has to be immediately rejected in order to emphasise one's own merits and greatness instead. Although this type of pride is certainly much milder, it also closes the heart and binds the person to himself and his own feelings.

There are many other types of pride and presumption, but this is not the appropriate occasion to dwell on each of them....

What is important for our spiritual path and for avoiding and counteracting pride is to live in the awareness that we are limited creatures, and that all that is great has been given to us by God. If in our service we receive recognition and honour from people, let us always remember the Lord's words to his disciples: "When you have done all you have been told to do, say, *"We are useless servants: we have done no more than our duty."* (Lk 17:10). These words will be a remedy to counteract every form of vanity!

When we serve God, we are simply doing what is ours to do. It is only our response - and often so weak - to His infinite love, and it is not even worthy of mention. It will be God who rewards us, and we do not need to do it ourselves in our pride and vanity, for, in that case, we would have already given ourselves the reward.

So let us not boast of what we have done and rendered. Rather, let us glory in God's great love, which lifts us up and makes us capable of loving as well.

When thoughts and feelings of pride arise, we should immediately call upon the Holy Spirit to fight against them. Let us also ask Him to enable us to perceive our pride, for pride likes to hide so as not to be discovered. One can even be too proud to want to acknowledge one's pride, however absurd it may be....

Humility, on the other hand, makes us receptive and allows God to exalt us.

