

25. September 2022

## Woe to the wicked!

*Am 6:1a.4-7*

*Thus says the Lord almighty: "Disaster for those so comfortable in Zion and for those so confident on the hill of Samaria, the notables of this first of nations, those to whom the House of Israel has recourse!*

*Lying on ivory beds and sprawling on their divans, they dine on lambs from the flock, and stall-fattened veal; they bawl to the sound of the lyre and, like David, they invent musical instruments; they drink wine by the bowlful, and lard themselves with the finest oils, but for the ruin of Joseph they care nothing. That is why they will now go into captivity, heading the column of captives. The sprawlers' revelry is over."*

Let us not be deceived into believing that an ungodly life has no consequences. Our freedom does not consist in doing whatever we want, but in seeking God's Will and fulfilling it. By following His way, we live in harmony with God and also with ourselves, and become a blessing for other people.

On the other hand, those who enjoy the pleasures of this world to the full, forgetting God and their neighbor, carry a heavy yoke upon their souls and bring misfortune upon themselves. Only a sincere conversion can save them, preventing them from indulging in luxury and closing their eyes to the needs of the poor. But if they remain on the path of perdition, the words which the Lord pronounces by the mouth of the Prophet Amos will fall upon them: *"Spare me the din of your chanting, let me hear none of your strumming on lyres, but let justice flow like water, and uprightness like a never-failing stream!"* (Am 5:23-24).

Perhaps we have become accustomed to the fact that in our society such lifestyles as those described in the reading exist, and that such people are even admired for their wealth and power. However, there is no reason to admire them. On the contrary, they are very poor people who do not realize the situation their soul is in and do not realize that one day they will have to give an account to their Creator. Possibly their unconcern and self-confidence leads them to dismiss the idea that they will have to appear before God as something ridiculous. What an abyss we see here! What threat looms over them?

*"That is why they will now go into captivity, heading the column of captives."*

To be banished from one's homeland is a hard fate, and exile from the people to which one belongs is even harder to bear. But to be separated from God is unbearable! Yet this is precisely the fate of those who turn away from God and reject his grace. If they do not convert, they will already in this life begin to feel the consequences.

And with what will they place that God alone should occupy in the heart of man? With earthly pleasures and enjoyments, with sins, with riches, honor and so many other things that burden and darken the soul, leaving in it an inner emptiness that it will constantly try to evade. Thus, the soul of this person already lives in exile, because it separates itself more and more from its beloved Creator and contaminates itself with all kinds of idols. Instead of the psalmody of the harps resounding to the glory of God, delighting and uplifting the soul, they "*bawl to the sound of the lyre*". Man's life becomes a great disharmony. How can he still be saved?

Only the love and mercy of God can still bring him to conversion! The Lord calls us to pray for these people, to intercede for them before Him, precisely for those who, in their ignorance and blindness, in their pride and vanity, are in danger of condemning themselves forever.

Even if their behavior is repugnant and they bear grave faults, they are still called by God to a life of grace. God created them out of love. Let us hold fast to this certainty and pray for them that they may be converted, that, at least in their last breath, they may once call upon the name of the Lord with repentance and trust. No person - not even our worst enemy - should be separated from God for all eternity and be tormented by demons. Perhaps he will yet awaken from his delusion and be converted! We should at least try and offer God that which is in our power to do.