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A SERIES ON SPIRITUAL LIFE

Passive Purification

Even if we apply all our will to carry out in ourselves the active purification, we will not be able to overcome everything that prevents us from fully corresponding to the love of the Lord. There are attitudes and attachments that are too deeply rooted, and often we are not even aware of them... That is why the Lord comes to our aid by means of another process, which goes beyond what our own efforts in active purification could bring us: It is the so-called "passive purification".

In our journey of following Christ, when we have undertaken it more intensely, God provokes or allows certain circumstances in our life to show us where we still need to work on our sanctification; where a change or transformation in our soul is necessary.

For example, something that is particularly difficult for us is to perceive our own pride. There is an Arabic saying that says it is easier to identify a black beetle on a black stone on a black night than it is to recognize the pride in our heart.

But, since the Lord wants us to overcome everything that blocks His grace, it may happen that, unexpectedly, we begin to experience humiliations, which, on the one hand, will show us with how much pride we still react; and, on the other hand, will invite us to take steps of humility. It could happen that precisely the people who used to appreciate us and even admire us suddenly change their opinion of us, without there being an obvious reason for it...

God does not want us to be dependent on other people's praise, nor to measure our value according to the recognition we receive from them; rather, it is enough for us to be His beloved children, and that is where our true security lies. We must learn to love God above all else, and, for this, it will be necessary to detach ourselves from disordered self-love, as well as from all disordered attachments to other people.

It may even happen that, on the path of discipleship, enmities towards others arise that are totally incomprehensible. When this is the case, we can examine whether we are

really capable of loving our enemies, just as Jesus exhorts us to do in the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5:44).

We can learn to love our enemies by making an act of our will: for example, by praying for them and not closing our hearts to them. This does not mean that from one moment to the next all contrary feelings will disappear; but, with the right decision of the will, they can be restrained.

Passive purifications can also occur through illnesses or adverse circumstances in our life.

Without going into further details, it is worth mentioning that passive purifications often have repercussions on our prayer life as well. If before we used to practice a rather active prayer, now we will more often seek the Lord in silence, simply desiring to be with Him and invoke His name. It is the Spirit of God who leads us to this form of prayer, and it is He who is taking the initiative.

Many people, even if they try to live their faith seriously, do not understand the deeper meaning of the purifications and therefore reject or shy away from them, because they do not understand that the purifications are a process of God's love! They are afraid of having to give up certain things that bring them joy, and often the devil and their environment take care of reinforcing these fears...

But in reality it is about something different... The process of purification is carried out by the Holy Spirit; that is, by the love that has been poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). On the one hand, He fills us and invites us to do everything that increases His love; on the other hand, He teaches us what does not conform to His love and makes us see where the obstacles are, calling us to take corresponding measures...

It would be very advisable for us to consider the Holy Spirit as the best teacher we could have for the spiritual path; as a true interior guide. Gently but insistently, He wants to lead us towards unification with the Will of the Father. If we would clearly notice what our brother or sister lacks in their journey with God, would we not give them appropriate advice? Would we not also encourage them to take the right steps?

This is precisely what the Holy Spirit does! But there is a huge difference! We human beings can only give advice and set a good example. The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is directly in charge of carrying out the necessary purifications in us, wanting to enlighten us and unite us totally to God. That is why it is so important to listen to Him and let Him guide us! The Holy Spirit is the key to spiritual growth!