

2. November 2022

Commemoration of the Faithful Departed Souls in a state of purification

Lam 3:17-26

I have been deprived of peace, I have forgotten what happiness is and thought, 'My lasting hope in the Lord is lost.' Bring to mind my misery and anguish; it is wormwood and gall! My heart dwells on this continually and sinks within me. This is what I shall keep in mind and so regain some hope: Surely the Lord's mercies are not over, his deeds of faithful love not exhausted; every morning they are renewed; great is his faithfulness! 'The Lord is all I have,' I say to myself, 'and so I shall put my hope in him.' The Lord is good to those who trust him, to all who search for him. It is good to wait in silence for the Lord to save.

This is one of the readings chosen by the Church for the day on which we commemorate the faithful departed. Could it be that this text of lamentations describes the state of those souls who are still awaiting their definitive return to the Father's House and to the presence of God? In any case, this passage makes us think of a believer who is going through inner anguish and whose soul is restless.

We know by faith that those who in life did not respond sufficiently to God's love, will have to be purified even after their death. That is to say that all the times they preferred other things to God, they prevented divine love from filling them so that unification with God could take place... Union with God in eternity is total, and nothing within us will separate us from love for Him.

At the moment of death, the soul sees itself with the eyes of God. It painfully perceives the state in which it finds itself. It could be said that it then voluntarily accepts to undergo the necessary purifications, because it knows that it cannot yet respond to the love of God as it should.

But to the soul's great pain is added hope, for it knows that it is not condemned and that it will not have to live forever excluded from God's presence.

In the text of Lamentations that we have heard today, we can discover both states of the soul: both affliction and hope. When the soul turns away from God - which it recognizes with all clarity and deep repentance after death - one finds in it elements such as lack of peace, restlessness, unhappiness, loss of confidence... All this darkens the soul and makes it feel helpless and deprived of a home. Of course, this state can also be found in a soul before death. The difference is that a soul in purgatory is fully aware of it, whereas, when a person in this life becomes aware of their state, they often do not associate it with estrangement from God, so that they do not know how to find the right remedy either.

But the remedy is the same! When we go through a stage of darkness, we should not focus our attention on that sort of "abyss" in which we find ourselves; nor persist in melancholy. *"My heart dwells on this continually and sinks within me"* - today's reading tells us, and, by comparing this state with the "gall that poisons" gives us all an enormously valuable piece of advice: We will not be able to solve problems if we bury ourselves in them! Rather, let us turn to the Lord and hope in Him, every morning anew.

This applies particularly to the souls in purgatory, because they can no longer do anything for themselves. What they can do is pray for other people! The souls in purgatory need help: they always depend on the mercy of the Lord and the help of the Church. Our prayers and acts of love can shorten the time of purification of the deceased, because we are united in a communion of love in one Church. They are part of the "purgative Church"; and we, as the "Church militant", can pray daily for the deceased, for example, in the recitation of the Angelus or in the Holy Rosary. This is a great work of spiritual mercy!

During the month of November, prayer for the souls in purgatory is particularly recommended. There are some private revelations that suggest in a special way the Hail Mary, promising that, through our prayer, many souls will be helped. We should not miss this opportunity, because souls in a state of purification really suffer because they cannot yet be fully united to the Lord, and they will be very grateful for our help. Moreover, Christian prudence also suggests that we pray for the blessed souls in purgatory, because in this way we gain friends in heaven.