

24. November 2022

The Righteousness of God

Rev 18:1-2,21-23;19:1-3,9a

After this, I saw another angel come down from heaven, with great authority given to him; the earth shone with his glory. At the top of his voice he shouted, 'Babylon has fallen, Babylon the Great has fallen, and has become the haunt of devils and a lodging for every foul spirit and dirty, loathsome bird. Then a powerful angel picked up a boulder like a great millstone, and as he hurled it into the sea, he said, 'That is how the great city of Babylon is going to be hurled down, never to be seen again. Never again in you will be heard the song of harpists and minstrels, the music of flute and trumpet; never again will craftsmen of every skill be found in you or the sound of the handmill be heard; never again will shine the light of the lamp in you, never again will be heard in you the voices of bridegroom and bride. Your traders were the princes of the earth, all the nations were led astray by your sorcery. After this I heard what seemed to be the great sound of a huge crowd in heaven, singing, 'Alleluia! Salvation and glory and power to our God! He judges fairly, he punishes justly, and he has condemned the great prostitute who corrupted the earth with her prostitution; he has avenged the blood of his servants which she shed.' And again they sang, 'Alleluia! The smoke of her will rise for ever and ever.' The angel said, 'Write this, "Blessed are those who are invited to the wedding feast of the Lamb," ' and he added, 'These words of God are true.'

In yesterday's meditation, we had talked about the victorious crowd, who overcame all tribulation and intone the song of Moses and the Lamb to the glory of God.

Today we hear how the city of Babylon, which represents all the ungodliness of the world, comes to its deserved end. Instead of bearing witness to God and using for His glorification the gifts she had received from Him, Babylon became the dwelling place of those spirits that have rebelled against God. She prostituted herself, because she gave place to these spirits and allowed herself to be seduced by them to lead an abominable life.

However we interpret this passage -whether it refers to God's judgment on certain cities or kingdoms throughout history, or whether it alludes to the Final Judgment on all ungodliness- it is, after all, an act of God's justice.

This arouses rejoicing in heaven: a great multitude expresses its joy at God's action and praises His truthfulness and justice.

Here we can identify something that is deeply rooted in all of us: the cry for justice. While "mercy prevails over judgment" (James 2:13), justice is linked to our being as persons. Certainly this thirst for justice is not about rejoicing at the punishment of individual persons, for whose sins we can always mourn and weep; rather, it is about longing for the restoration of all things; a reality in which justice dwells.

An ungodly life, without God, darkens the light in the world and seduces many people. This is a perversion! Although in our time we have become more and more accustomed to depravity and the conscience and the rejection of sin have weakened, ungodliness is still a terrible reality, which can turn earthly life into hell.

We, as people and even more so as Christians, know well that this is so. And even better than we do, that multitude in heaven knows it to be so, for they already enjoy the glory of God and therefore recognize more clearly the vileness of the demons and their followers. Since they are totally inflamed by the love of God, they are much more sensitive than we are to any offense done to Him. Consequently, their joy is also great when God re-establishes justice, after so long a time of infinite perseverance and suffering.

We too can feel a joy similar to that of the heavenly crowd, without having to feel a guilty conscience for it... Let us think, for example, of a ruthless political dictatorship, which gags and binds people, robbing them of their freedom. Think of the nightmare of Hitler's dictatorship, with its entourage of ungodly and blinded leaders, who believed they had the right to exterminate millions of people in the gas chambers and subjugate the people under their rule. How relieved people must have been once this perversion came to an end and those responsible were held accountable!

This is not an act of revenge; it is not "making a person pay dearly" for what he did. Rather, it is a profound relief in seeing that God does not allow ungodliness to subsist

forever; in having the hope that in the end the light will be separated from the darkness and in God there will be an eternal Kingdom where love and justice rule, and where no more tares grow among the wheat (cf. Mt 13:24-30).

Perhaps at times we become impatient and ask ourselves: How much longer will it take for the Lord to bring justice? Perhaps we want to make fire fall from heaven already, like the disciples (cf. Lk 9:54). But then faith assures us that in your hands, Beloved Lord, everything is in the best of hands, and that you will know the proper moment. Your judgments are true and just!

Therefore we praise You and join our voices to the multitude acclaiming in heaven: *"Alleluia! Salvation, glory and power belong to our God, for His judgments are true and righteous."*