

17. January 2023

## Doing the good permanently

*Heb 6:10-20*

*God would not be so unjust as to forget all you have done, the love that you have for his name or the services you have done, and are still doing, for the holy people of God. Our desire is that every one of you should go on showing the same enthusiasm till the ultimate fulfilment of your hope, never growing careless, but taking as your model those who by their faith and perseverance are heirs of the promises. When God made the promise to Abraham, he swore by his own self, since there was no one greater he could swear by: I will shower blessings on you and give you many descendants. Because of that, Abraham persevered and received fulfilment of the promise. Human beings, of course, swear an oath by something greater than themselves, and between them, confirmation by an oath puts an end to all dispute. In the same way, when God wanted to show the heirs of the promise even more clearly how unalterable his plan was, he conveyed it by an oath so that through two unalterable factors in which God could not be lying, we who have fled to him might have a vigorous encouragement to grasp the hope held out to us. This is the anchor our souls have, reaching right through inside the curtain where Jesus has entered as a forerunner on our behalf, having become a high priest for ever, of the order of Melchizedek.*

God never forgets a gesture of love that we have given. He would rather forget our evil deeds and gladly forgive us if we ask for it. This is even more true when we do the good deeds with Him in mind. They then take on a greater worth. There are many passages in the Holy Scriptures that make this clear to us (cf. e.g. Mt 6:3-4). Not least is the example of St. Mary Magdalene, who received forgiveness because of her love for the Lord (cf. Lk 7:47).

So we know a sure way that leads to the goal: It is the way of love.

The apostle points out that we should walk this path diligently and not slacken. It is not a path that is only good for a time, that delights and perhaps inspires us, but then

slackens again and perhaps even peters out. It is a matter of loving permanently, of remaining firm in this love and of growing.

If we walk this path consciously, then we will easily direct our will to the good, especially at the beginning under the influence of grace. Doing good is beautiful, gives peace to the soul and brings comfort and help to people. This can go on and please us for a long time.

But it can also happen after a while that what was easy for us before becomes more difficult. Then we must not leave the path, even if we feel like a kind of hypocrite, because we find it difficult to do what is good. But if we go through such a phase, then we grow in love and the Lord has purified us more deeply.

Why purification?

The purification is necessary because there is still a certain imperfection in the way we do good and we should learn to do good simply for the sake of doing good, whether it is easy or difficult. If natural joy is still too dominant, there is a danger that when we encounter ingratitude, for example, we will easily withdraw, perhaps even be offended, and stop doing good.

So when certain difficulties arise in the works of good, it is necessary to activate our will even more deeply and to direct our actions even more towards God than towards our neighbour. We do good to our neighbour not only for the sake of our neighbour, but also for the sake of the Lord. If this is so, then a lack of gratitude and a lack of attention, or in extreme cases even ingratitude and accusations, for example, of not having done enough, will not prevent us from continuing to do good. In this way, the Holy Spirit works even more strongly in us. It is important for us to know that all our works are known to God. That is enough!

So purification causes our love to be anchored more deeply in God and thus brings about greater fruitfulness.

A brief note before concluding: starting tomorrow we will be listening in 4 parts to an radioplay on the moving story of St. Agnes, which will culminate on her Feast Day, the 21st of January. We hope it will be an encouragement to imitate this saint who,

even at such a young age, knew how to be faithful until death to the One to whom she was betrothed!