

9. February 2023

## “A way to a pure heart”

### Part 2

We continue with the theme from yesterday. It is primarily about this Gospel passage of 8 February:

*'It is what comes out of someone that makes that person unclean. For it is from within, from the heart, that evil intentions emerge: fornication, theft, murder, adultery, avarice, malice, deceit, indecency, envy, slander, pride, folly. All these evil things come from within and make a person unclean.'* (Mk 7:20-23)

With the willingness to perceive one's depths before the loving Lord, a double realism arises: one recognises both the dark side in oneself and at the same time encounters the mercy of God. One understands that God does not reject and punish because of the impurity that comes from the heart, but that His love has set out to bring light into the darkness.

It is not a question of integrating the shadow, as is sometimes suggested in depth psychology, and seeing it as part of the personality. This cannot be a way to transform the heart. A correct view of “integration” of the “shadow” is the recognition of the fact that there are abysses in the heart and that these should not be repressed. The shadow, however, does not essentially belong to man, but is the deformation of his very being, the inheritance of the “old Adam” who, turned away from God, fell under the dominion of sin (cf. Rom 5:12). He distorts the image of God, which God in His goodness wants to restore. For this process, the purification of the heart is essential.

Therefore, there must be a clear decision of the will not to tolerate or relativise anything in oneself that does not correspond to love and truth. In order for us to see that we have to take responsibility for what happens within us, we need only remember that word of Jesus which tells us that the sin of adultery begins with the impure look and not only with the act itself.

On the way to a pure heart we must not compromise, we must not tolerate half measures. For this clear decision, the so-called “first conversion” is a prerequisite,

because we are now entering the path of the “second conversion”, which we can call the path to the conversion of the heart.

This decision of the will, which we have to make clearly and consciously and maintain, is our essential contribution so that the transformation of the heart can take place. But it is not enough, especially in view of our human weaknesses, which are well known to the Lord. The main work of inner transformation is done by the grace of God. Therefore, there are two significant words of the Holy Scripture: “*make yourselves a new heart*” (Ezek 18:31) and “*I shall give you a new heart*” (36:26).

The concrete way is that I carry to God in prayer everything I discover in myself that does not agree with the way of the Lord. Because of our extensive blindness for our own faults and wrong attitudes, we have to ask the Holy Spirit again and again to show us what still needs transformation, what does not agree with the way of holiness.

Let us return to the evil thoughts that were mentioned first in yesterday's list. If they arise from our heart, we must pray to God immediately, call upon the Holy Spirit and confront them in this way. St. Benedict teaches that we should smash evil thoughts on the “rock of Christ”.

It would be important to distinguish whether these are thoughts that recur again and again. This would indicate that they are not simply satanic attacks, but that they sit deeper within us and are connected with certain feelings. If we perceive this, then it is usually not enough to reject them decisively once, but to carry them persistently, again and again to the Lord - perhaps before the tabernacle - and ask him for healing and liberation.

Let us take an example: Whenever I see a certain person, evil thoughts and feelings rise up in me. I know by now that these thoughts are wrong and against love and I fight against them. I also succeed in getting rid of the thoughts, which in itself is a victory. But they keep coming back, almost every time I see this person.

This can be an indication that I still have something in my heart against the person, perhaps I have not forgiven him, I bear a grudge against him, and so on. Therefore it is necessary to bring these inner feelings permanently to God, to speak them out before

Him, to enter into conversation with Him about them, to ask Him to heal these feelings through the Holy Spirit and to free me from them.

Thus, I will be working on two levels: on the one hand, counteracting the current bad thoughts, not indulging them and turning my will away from them. On the other hand, we also address the deeper cause: the bad thoughts and feelings may have been rooted in the heart for quite some time. Then, the current rejection of the other person can always "fall back" on this potential, so to speak, if it has not been healed and liberated by the Lord.

Tomorrow we will continue with the third part of this theme...

Note: I have addressed the topic of dealing with thoughts specifically and you can read about this in the archives of my website:

<http://en.elijamission.net/?s=The+Asceticism+of+the+thoughts>

My video lecture on YouTube (English- Spanish) also belongs to this complex of topics:

<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=i9QDNBvER3I>