

10. February 2023

A way to a pure heart
Part 3

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

'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)

What has been said about dealing with thoughts also applies to all the other areas referred to by the Lord. It is to be hoped that not all the wickednesses mentioned are found in our hearts, but the tendency to do so lies in our fallen nature. We have to be careful - but not tense and scrupulous - about what we perceive in ourselves and deal with it accordingly.

Let us add envy as an example.

This is a very persistent malice that we have to deal with resolutely. Here it helps, for example, to pray for the other person, to constantly open our own heart to God and to ask the Holy Spirit to touch this darkness in us. Envy closes our heart to God and to the other person and makes our being dark. If we now willingly renounce envy in our heart, focus our will on granting the other person the good given by God and thank the Lord for it, then we have taken the right direction. Here we need very much the help of the Holy Spirit, so that this act of will becomes constant on the one hand and on the other hand also touches the reason from which this envy flows, namely our heart. Let's make the process clearer as to what happens when we call upon the Holy Spirit to cast out our shadow.

Envy comes from darkness, it is called "the Devil's envy" (Wis 2:24) and it darkens our heart. When we give ourselves over to envy, our heart becomes evil and envy becomes the driving force of evil actions, it becomes destructive in every way and it kills love.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, is love itself poured into our hearts (cf. Rom 5:5). It is a way in which our heavenly Father wants to establish His throne in us. The love of God begrudges no one anything. On the contrary, it gives itself and makes us the recipients of gifts who are also able to give gifts to others. So if we now, instead of following the impulses of darkness, distance ourselves from it, then with such an act we willingly renounce wickedness. This act is already supported by the Holy Spirit, otherwise we would not even properly recognise envy and act in this way.

In the concrete invocation of the Holy Spirit into the darkness of envy, He touches the darkness within us and transforms it, for the darkness must give way to the light. In other words, the love of God now enters our heart more intensely at this point and leads our heart out of the grip of evil and releases it. The narrowness of wickedness is replaced by the breadth of love.

But not to fall into any illusion: it is usually a long struggle, unless God, with an extraordinary grace, permanently frees a person from a great evil from one day to the next - which can happen. Again and again one will perceive envy in oneself, perhaps in a weakened way after some time, when the love of God has found more space in our heart. Again and again one is asked to perform acts that counteract envy. We will suffer from the fact that we still perceive envy in our heart, although we have already willingly separated ourselves from it. This suffering is a very good and wholesome suffering. It shows that love lives more in our heart. We suffer from our tendency to wickedness and yet we want so much to be different, the way God wants us to be.

This condition reminds me of a word that I once perceived in my heart and which has accompanied me ever since. The word was: "You must first suffer from your evil heart, then plead on your knees for a new heart."

What I have elaborated for the subject of envy applies to all other wickednesses that the Lord has set before us (Mk 7:21-22).

It is necessary to recognise them in one's own heart with the help of God, to turn away from wickedness, to strive for virtues and to ask for healing and deliverance through the Holy Spirit in concrete processes of transformation.

This is a way that we can describe to cooperate in the transformation of our hearts.

We should never forget, so that we do not lose courage on such a path, that all this happens in the presence of a loving Father who wants our sanctification. It should already dwell in us that fullness which is possible on earth (cf. Mt 5:48). God is a Father who knows our weaknesses and backslidings and always raises us up again. The sacraments are of inestimable help to us, especially the Sacrament of Reconciliation and the Holy Mass.

So we are called to this true and noble struggle and with the Holy Confirmation we have already been sacramentally strengthened.

This is the true battle, because with it we come to the centre. The powers of darkness want to make use of people's evil inclinations in order to plunge them into disaster. So it is not only a fight for personal holiness, but it is also important for our Church and for its mission to this world. This fight is essential to our vocation as Christians, if we are to be part of the Lamb's army and wage war alongside Him against the dragon!

After all, it is about our heart. Does it belong to the Lord (see first commandment) or to the abyss? Purity of heart is a great victory, for it will see God (cf. Mt 5:8).

We know that we are supported in this struggle by the Mother of the Lord, whose immaculate heart will bring about victory over the powers of darkness.

We, as weak human beings, can only stand this battle with the grace of God, for which we should plead on our knees every day! God will grant it to us and assign us our place in the flock of the Lamb.