

19. June 2023

Taking advantage of the time of grace

2 Cor 6:1-10

As his fellow-workers, we urge you not to let your acceptance of his grace come to nothing. As he said, 'At the time of my favour I have answered you; on the day of salvation I have helped you'; well, now is the real time of favour, now the day of salvation is here. We avoid putting obstacles in anyone's way, so that no blame may attach to our work of service; but in everything we prove ourselves authentic servants of God; by resolute perseverance in times of hardships, difficulties and distress; when we are flogged or sent to prison or mobbed; labouring, sleepless, starving; in purity, in knowledge, in patience, in kindness; in the Holy Spirit, in a love free of affectation; in the word of truth and in the power of God; by using the weapons of uprightness for attack and for defence: in times of honour or disgrace, blame or praise; taken for impostors and yet we are genuine; unknown and yet we are acknowledged; dying, and yet here we are, alive; scourged but not executed; in pain yet always full of joy; poor and yet making many people rich; having nothing, and yet owning everything.

Do not receive God's grace in vain...

With what words the Apostle Paul shakes us and warns us! God's overwhelming gifts, the gifts and talents with which He showers us, are in the first instance signs of His infinite love. However, they are also an obligation of love, because we are called to walk the path of holiness and to bear witness to God's love.

When would we be wasting our life, not using it for the glory of the Lord and depriving our brothers and sisters of the message of God's love, for which they are waiting so long? This can only happen if we neglect our way with God, if it is not renewed within us again and again, if the power of the Holy Spirit in us diminishes, if we become too busy with the world and other insignificant things, if we lose the hierarchy of values, if we fall into sin and do not get up again....

The Apostle then goes on to tell us what we are to keep in mind and what example the "servants of God", as Paul also calls himself, have given us.

"Avoid putting obstacles in anyone's way", says the Apostle. This requires us to live with the greatest care in all areas... It is precisely in Christians that we hope to find those virtues

that are increasingly being lost in society. Christians who argue aggressively; Christians who always want to be right; Christians who are driven by their own inclinations; Christians who are greedy, vain or liars, represent an intrinsic contradiction. It is a great challenge to always be aware that everything we do is a testimony. In this regard, it might be helpful to recall that phrase that St. Benedict Abbot addressed to his brothers, exhorting them to do everything with God's presence in mind.

"...By *resolute perseverance*", says St Paul. And then he mentions all the difficult circumstances in which perseverance must be tested. Today, we Christians also need steadfastness, in order to give full witness to our faith in the midst of a world which, in some countries that had already been Christianised, is falling into a "neo-paganism" that is spreading more and more through globalisation. An anti-Christian spirit is contaminating the mentality of many people, and has also penetrated our Church. It acts like a cancerous tumour, and wants to turn people away from God, to relativise the faith or to show it as something old-fashioned.

Perseverance and constancy means defending and proclaiming the fundamental truths of our faith. Christ is the only Redeemer! He has commissioned His disciples to bring the Gospel to all peoples. God's commandments are still in force, even if many people do not want to recognise them. The profession of our faith has not been revoked or changed.

Let us accept the Apostle's exhortation to take advantage of the time of grace and to live and witness to our faith with constancy. There is nothing more important than this!