



21. June 2023

God Loves a Cheerful Giver

2 Cor 9:6-11

But remember: anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well - and anyone who sows generously will reap generously as well. Each one should give as much as he has decided on his own initiative, not reluctantly or under compulsion, for God loves a cheerful giver. God is perfectly able to enrich you with every grace, so that you always have enough for every conceivable need, and your resources overflow in all kinds of good work. As scripture says: To the needy he gave without stint, his uprightness stands firm for ever. The one who so freely provides seed for the sower and food to eat will provide you with ample store of seed for sowing and make the harvest of your uprightness a bigger one: you will be rich enough in every way for every kind of generosity that makes people thank God for what we have done.

In today's reading, the Apostle encourages us to give with a free and generous heart. Can one rejoice in a gift if the giver gives it only out of obligation and reluctance, or perhaps forced by the expectations of others? Such a gift lacks the heart, so to speak, and is therefore not an expression of love, which is the essential characteristic of the gift.

Paul reminds us that “*God loves a cheerful giver*”, for if one gives in the right attitude, it produces joy not only for the recipient of the gift, but also for the giver. The Apostle tells us another great truth, which should mark the life of every Christian: “*anyone who sows sparsely will reap sparsely as well*”.

We can go beyond the field of purely material giving, and apply this wonderful teaching of St. Paul to our whole way of following Christ. The question arises as to whether and how we give ourselves entirely to the Lord: do we give only something of ourselves or do we give ourselves? Do we give God a part of our time or do we give it all to Him?

Here too it applies that “*God loves a cheerful giver*”, and so we can learn to do everything willingly and cheerfully for the sake of His Kingdom. This certainly does not mean that we will always be driven by the impulse of emotions, although such moments are also beautiful. It is rather a joy that arises from inner union with God's Will, and from understanding what God is like and how much it pleases Him that we respond to His generosity with our total self-giving. This is why St. Paul invites us to look to the example of God Himself.

If we meditate on God's way of acting and being, and accept His Spirit, we can become more and more like Him, moved on the wings of His love. Of course, for this to happen we will have to put aside the laziness and selfishness within us. But it will become easier each time we respond to the Lord, for love will grow in us.

St. Paul writes about this mystery in today's text: God is able to pour out all gifts in abundance, and we lose nothing if we give ourselves to selfless love. In this context, we are reminded of the famous saying of St. Francis of Assisi: "It is by giving that one receives".

Paul's invitation to the Corinthians touches us on our best side. The consequence of Christian life and imitation of the Lord is self-giving. Whatever we do for the Kingdom of God will derive its beauty from the freedom and joy with which we do it. This also counts for the sacrifices we offer. Let us remember that Jesus also exhorts us, for example, not to put on a gloomy look when we fast (*cf. Mt 6:16-18*).

In this context, I am reminded of what a priest told us some time ago about the life of Marthe Robin. She was a woman who spent many years bedridden and unable to move. She had a reputation for holiness. The priest I mentioned wanted to meet her, but told himself that he would only be impressed if she remained joyful in the midst of her suffering. About the first meeting they had, he told us that they laughed a lot together. She was a woman who suffered more than we can imagine, but she was happy in spite of it, and she had learned to offer this enormous suffering willingly to the Lord!