

11. July 2023

Attaining wisdom

Pr 2:1-9

Reading for the memorial of Saint Benedict the Abbot

My child, if you take my words to heart, if you set store by my commandments, tuning your ear to wisdom, tuning your heart to understanding, yes, if your plea is for clear perception, if you cry out for understanding, if you look for it as though for silver, search for it as though for buried treasure, then you will understand what the fear of Yahweh is, and discover the knowledge of God. For Yahweh himself is giver of wisdom, from his mouth issue knowledge and understanding. He reserves his advice for the honest, a shield to those whose ways are sound; he stands guard over the paths of equity, he keeps watch over the way of those faithful to him. Then you will understand uprightness, equity and fair dealing, the paths that lead to happiness.

Today, on the feast of St. Benedict, we are reminded of something very important, which threatens to be increasingly lost in our time, replaced by incomparably lesser things. This is wisdom, which is often described as 'delightful knowledge'.

Wisdom is one of the gifts of the Holy Spirit, not to be confused with the knowledge we acquire through the efforts of our understanding, which is a light that does not go beyond the plane of the natural. Wisdom, on the other hand, is the inflow of God's supernatural light into our minds and hearts. Thus, this 'delightful knowledge' reveals God Himself to us from within, and it is not so much the knowledge of His works.

Today's reading points out that we can attain wisdom by accepting the Word of God in our heart and deepening it within us, for it is the "lamp to our steps" (cf. Ps 119:105). Since this word comes from God Himself (although we receive it through the mediation of persons), it enlightens us and transmits divine wisdom to us. If we allow it to enter us, the word forms us and we learn to be governed by it.

We can understand it in the following way: the supernatural light of the Lord is present in the Word we receive. It penetrates into us, as we let it in, and begins to spread its light. Our way of thinking and our heart are touched and transformed by

this light. If we assimilate the Word of God deeply, it will remain in us as a treasure and will enlighten us unceasingly. The Spirit of God will remind us of this Word in every concrete situation that needs to be enlightened by it.

Let us take an example with this quotation from the Letter of James: "*Remember this, my dear brothers: everyone should be quick to listen but slow to speak and slow to human anger*" (James 1:19). If we assimilate this word of Scripture deeply, our behaviour will change according to the instructions it gives us. When we are in danger of speaking rashly and unwisely, interrupting others and being impatient in listening, this word will remind us of the right attitude. But the word not only instructs and corrects us to acquire right conduct, it also gives us the strength to change our attitude. Of course, it also requires that we are convinced that the Word of God points us in the right direction, and that we are willing to allow ourselves to be corrected and formed by it.

We could find countless examples like the above, where we experience the enlightenment that comes from the Word of God. The more we listen to it and obey it, the more our wisdom will grow.

Saint Benedict, who is considered the Father of Western monasticism, left us as a legacy the famous Benedictine Rule, which was to serve as a guide for his monks to live according to divine wisdom. This rule begins with the words: "Listen, my son", recalling that listening is the basic condition for attaining wisdom. The attitude of listening must not be only occasional; it must permeate our whole life. Let us remember that, in our relationship with God, we are the receivers; and if our attention is focused on Him and we strive to deepen what we receive from Him, then we will produce the fruits that God has set for our life.