

23. July 2023

God's strength

Wis 12:13.16-19

For there is no other God but thou, who hast care of all, that thou shouldst shew that thou dost not give judgment unjustly. For thy power is the beginning of justice: and because thou art Lord of all, thou makest thyself gracious to all. For thou shewest thy power, when men will not believe thee to be absolute in power, and thou convincest the boldness of them that know thee not. But thou being master of power, judgest with tranquillity; and with great favour disposest of us: for thy power is at hand when thou wilt. But thou hast taught thy people by such works, that they must be just and humane, and hast made thy children to be of a good hope: because in judging thou givest place for repentance for sins.

Today's reading helps us to understand God's way of acting. His omnipotence does not manifest itself in tyranny or in the demonstration of brute force, as is often the case with dictators, but is revealed in His forbearance and kindness to all.

We humans are called to become like God, since we are created in His image. In this sense, the reading teaches us that the people of God "*must be just and humane*"; that is, they must put into practice those qualities of forbearance and kindness that characterise God.

But how is this to happen, if we do not possess the omnipotence and power of God, which make Him indulgent to all?

If we look at the relationship between God and a person who serves Him faithfully, we will see that the Lord makes him or her a sharer in His omnipotence. Recall how Jesus gave His disciples the power to cast out demons, heal the sick and even raise the dead in His name (cf. Mt 10:8). Let us also think of the power the Lord confers on His priests to transform bread and wine into His Body and Blood in the Holy Sacrifice. The legitimate authority exercised in the name of God is also a participation in the divine omnipotence.

From this point of view, it is clear that the Lord does not exercise His dominion in an authoritarian way, simply giving orders from a distance and imposing His will; rather, His dominion is a reign of love, which involves people in the mystery of this love and makes them sharers in the fullness of God.

Now, His dominion is to be prolonged in this same spirit through the people who obey and serve Him. In fact, when we follow the Lord, He gives us His Spirit to make us like Him. It is this Spirit that shapes us into the image of Christ, once we allow Him to establish His gentle dominion in us. The more the Spirit acts in us, the more the fruits of the Spirit will grow, one of which is meekness.

Meekness corresponds to that forbearance and serenity mentioned in today's reading. By acting with gentleness, one does not impose one's own goals with brutality, running over other people. On the contrary, one learns to wait for everything to grow and mature, and to overcome adversity with patience. Gentleness knows people's weakness and tries to help them when they turn in on themselves again and again, giving them a hand to lift them up and always offering them a new chance.

When we speak of meekness, we realise that this is precisely the way God deals with the sinner, offering him or her again and again the possibility of conversion and waiting with infinite patience. This is a sign of His true strength!

However, we cannot confuse meekness with a false permissiveness or condescension, which minimises the seriousness of sin and adapts to people's desires. In fact, today's text also tells us that God restrains the rashness of those who know His strength. When we rebel against God because of sin, the right help to shake us up and bring us to conversion would not be a meek and condescending reaction. In this case, people need to learn the lesson and may have to feel the consequences of their wrong attitude.

But even God's correction or punishment comes from the same source of His love, which wants to lead man to salvation. If we want to help to save souls, we too should act in this way. We must always keep in mind the eternal salvation of the person, so that, inspired by the Spirit of the Lord, we give him or her the right help to reach this goal.