

27. August 2023

God's wisdom in everything

Rom 11:33-36

O the depth of the riches of the wisdom and of the knowledge of God! How incomprehensible are his judgments, and how unsearchable his ways! For who hath known the mind of the Lord? Or who hath been his counsellor? Or who hath first given to him, and recompense shall be made him? For of him, and by him, and in him, are all things: to him be glory for ever. Amen.

This exclamation springs from the depths of St. Paul's heart, as he recognises God's marvellous designs in spite of the obstinacy of the people of Israel, most of whom did not recognise the Messiah. Paul was granted a profound knowledge of God, and to prevent him from falling into presumption the Lord allowed him to undergo a certain suffering, which he himself describes as a "thorn" in his flesh (cf. 2 Cor 12:7).

In this wonderful exclamation, St. Paul gives us good advice: We cannot probe God's plans. We are often confronted with situations that are incomprehensible to us. If we try to understand them with our limited reason, we may even end up going mad.

Think, for example, of the unexpected death of a child or a loved one. Or, looking at human history, we encounter such dark chapters as the massacre of so many Jews under the Nazi dictatorship. Who can explain such events; who can understand them?

In the face of such circumstances, we are invited to trust. Of course, trust does not only come into play in such dramatic and painful situations, but we must always practise it! It will become easier for us to understand God's designs once we abandon ourselves to Him. Perhaps later, after the act of trust has been performed, we may even be granted to understand something of God's wisdom as to why He allowed this or that to happen.

It is worth clarifying that this trust is not an attitude of resignation. It is not a matter of saying: "I'll never be able to understand it anyway", while deep down we continue to reproach God for the things that happen. No! Trust is a total 'yes', with the certainty that *"to them that love God, all things work together unto good"* (Rom 8:28)!

They are acts of faith in which we submit our heart, our understanding, our will and our emotions to the loving lordship of God. When we recognise God's marvellous designs in their positive aspect, praise and joy spring naturally from the heart, and it is easy for us to join in St. Paul's exclamation. On the other hand, when all seems dark and we cannot see the way, then faith alone will be the shining light that keeps us from falling into despair.

The foundation of this trust lies in the knowledge of God's love, which will increase as we ask for it in our prayer and discover it more and more on our journey. Only in this love can we truly know God; and the more we know Him, the more inner security we will have in the face of all the paths He has prepared for us.

We see, then, that this exclamation of St. Paul can greatly relieve and gladden our life. As the creatures that we are, it is necessary to remain in an attitude of humility in order to recognise God's marvellous designs. Although He has given us the understanding to enter into the laws of nature, we cannot apply the same logic to His ways. People do not function as a machine, but God created them as personal beings with freedom.

God knew how to integrate into His plan of salvation even those consequences that arose from the fall into sin. Human history includes so many mistakes, so many grave sins, so many falls, but also good will, obedience to God and the positive development of the gifts He has given to mankind. God wants to bring this history to a good end!

Therefore, human history is not simply a natural cycle that automatically ends well. Rather, it is a struggle between those who want to obey and serve God, contributing to the building of His Kingdom in this world; and those others who, either through ignorance or blindness, are in danger of becoming collaborators in the Devil's plans. Then there are also those others who have become evil through wilful blindness.

That wonderfully created angel, whom we call Lucifer, abused his liberty, and now, in his madness, wants to destroy the works of God. He works tirelessly to turn people to his side and to erect a dictatorship of evil.

All this God has in His plans, and He will lead all who serve and obey Him to the eternal abode which He has prepared for them.

Thus, despite being saddened by the fact that the vast majority of his people have rejected the Messiah, St Paul is able to lift up his praise to God, marvelling at his great wisdom. God is able to integrate everything into His saving plan; He alone is all-wise. We too can exclaim: Thanks be to God, it is His wisdom that rules the world, and not those destructive forces that achieve apparent victories but have already been defeated, for God will never abandon His own to perdition!