

1. October 2023

## Communion in the Spirit

Phil 2:1-11

*Bretheren, if there is any, any incentive of love, any participation in the Spirit, any affection and sympathy, complete my joy by being of the same mind, having the same love, being in full accord and of one mind. Do nothing from selfishness or conceit, but in humility count others better than yourselves. Let each of you look not only to his own interests, but also to the interests of others. Have this mind among yourselves, which is yours in Christ Jesus, who, though he was in the form of God, did not count equality with God a thing to be grasped, but emptied himself, taking the form of a servant,[a] being born in the likeness of men. And being found in human form he humbled himself and became obedient unto death, even death on a cross. Therefore God has highly exalted him and bestowed on him the name which is above every name, that at the name of Jesus every knee should bow, in heaven and on earth and under the earth, and every tongue confess that Jesus Christ is Lord, to the glory of God the Father.*

The apostle Paul, who is visibly pleased with the Philippian community, encourages them to continue their journey in earnest. At the same time he asks us these questions: How are our communities and parishes today? What is the situation of the Church? How do we treat one another? To what extent are we peacemakers?

Let us consider some of the expressions used by St Paul: he speaks of an "*encouragement in Christ*" and of an "*incentive of love*". With these terms he alludes to fraternal exhortation, which is intended to help the brethren to improve in their walk with God. It must obviously go hand in hand with one's own example of life. St Paul mentions exhortation together with "*incentive of love*", thus emphasising what is the inner motivation that should move us, which is to support our brothers and sisters in the faith. In fact, the whole first part of today's reading is marked by this attitude: brotherly love in the Spirit of God.

It is precisely fraternal charity that should characterise the community that is born in Christ. It is the total acceptance of the other, who has become our brother or sister in

the Lord. And this fellowship is not to be determined solely by sympathies or blood ties; rather, our fellowship is to be born of the Spirit and to be a reflection of the love of Christ Himself.

This is a high demand, and we can see that our hearts still need to be greatly transformed to be able to love in this way. Under the influence of grace, there are moments when, in a rapture of the heart, we feel the strength to respond to this challenge of love. And indeed, grace makes us capable!

But in the long run, we must walk our way with realism and work on our heart, for it is from it that ambition and vanity come, and it is in it that they must be overcome. This is the question we must ask ourselves sincerely: Do we feel and take responsibility for the dark depths of our heart? Or, to be more precise: Are we really willing to know ourselves, or are we running away from our own failings and suppressing them?

With these questions we touch on the subject of self-knowledge. We must not forget that after the knowledge of God, the most important thing is self-knowledge. With God's help, we should be able to examine our inner self and discover what is there. We can ask the Holy Spirit to show us everything that needs to be touched more deeply by Him. He will answer our request and with His help we can put aside everything that hinders love so that we can become a light for others.

In order to embark on the necessary journey of inner transformation, St Paul shows us the example of Christ. In Him, and by following Him, it will be possible to do what we are humanly incapable of doing: to form a community of brotherly charity, united in the same Lord and having the same sentiments as Christ.