

9. September 2023

Firm in faith

Col 1:21-23

'You were once estranged and of hostile intent through your evil behaviour; now he has reconciled you, by his death and in that mortal body, to bring you before himself holy, faultless and irreproachable-as long as you persevere and stand firm on the solid base of the faith, never letting yourselves drift away from the hope promised by the gospel, which you have heard, which has been preached to every creature under heaven, and of which I, Paul, have become the servant. '

Through His Son, God did everything to reconcile humanity to Himself. This is the immutable message which has been entrusted to the Church down the centuries and which is to reach all creatures. Regardless of the situation in which people find themselves, there are no hopeless cases! God has compassion on even the greatest of sinners. He loves them and wants them to be with him. It is up to us to accept the offer of grace we receive from the Lord.

What more could God do in His abasement towards man? When contemplating divine love, our hearts must be set aflame again and again, burning with gratitude. In this way, the Lord can turn all the sins and evil deeds we have committed into a fire of repentance, which penetrates our hearts more and more and inflames us with the desire to serve God with great dedication and purity. This same fire will drive us to bear witness of God's overwhelming love to others, so that they will turn from their evil ways and begin to live in God's grace.

But we need to remain steadfast in the faith, as the Apostle of the Gentiles warns us in today's reading. Indeed, faith is under attack from without and from within. The reality is not as it was presented some time ago by a high prelate of the Church, saying that there is no need to defend Christian values since they speak for themselves. On the contrary! Faith must be defended, as must the values that flow from it. If what the prelate said were true, then the world would have been converted long ago.

Precisely when we live in an environment hostile to the faith; in a world that pretends to offer a full life by pushing God aside; when public opinion spreads things contrary to the faith; when doubts begin to appear and we are even attacked by feelings that question faith and praxis; it is then that we must cling most firmly to the faith, without allowing anything to turn us away from the hope of the Gospel.

In order to remain firm in the faith, it is essential that we do not neglect the practices of our spiritual life (e.g. prayer, readiness to witness to the gospel, doing good works); even when our feelings push us to the contrary. In fact, it is often the case that our feelings contradict our faith, because it is our feelings that are the most changeable and influential.

Faith is a supernatural virtue; a gift and an offer from God, which we accept with our will. If our feelings pull us in another direction, we must hold on to the decision of our will and the convictions of faith, which we must also preserve in our understanding. Otherwise, we will be like a leaf that the wind blows where it wills. If our understanding becomes confused, we can defend ourselves through prayer, keeping the will focused on faith. In addition to making a profession of faith, we can reaffirm that we want to believe.

It is essential that we keep the faith as it has been handed down to us by the Church. The authentic Magisterium of the Church is a great help that God has given us over the centuries to preserve us from error. The gospel that was entrusted to Paul is the same gospel that is to be witnessed in this time. Let us hold fast to it, not only for our own sake, but also in order to bear witness in a world so confused and in need of clarity.