

12. September 2023

In Christ alone resides the fullness of the Godhead

Col 2:6-15

As therefore you received Christ Jesus the Lord, so live in him, 7 rooted and built up in him and established in the faith, just as you were taught, abounding in thanksgiving. See to it that no one makes a prey of you by philosophy and empty deceit, according to human tradition, according to the elemental spirits of the universe, and not according to Christ. For in him the whole fulness of deity dwells bodily, and you have come to fulness of life in him, who is the head of all rule and authority. In him also you were circumcised with a circumcision made without hands, by putting off the body of flesh in the circumcision of Christ; and you were buried with him in baptism, in which you were also raised with him through faith in the working of God, who raised him from the dead. And you, who were dead in trespasses and the uncircumcision of your flesh, God made alive together with him, having forgiven us all our trespasses, having canceled the bond which stood against us with its legal demands; this he set aside, nailing it to the cross. He disarmed the principalities and powers and made a public example of them, triumphing over them in him.

The Apostle's exhortation echoed in today's reading is no less relevant for Christians today than it was when Paul had to warn the community of Colosse to remain faithful to the Lord and to the faith handed down to them.

This faith is always threatened by tendencies to relativise or distort it. But here St Paul tells us that in Jesus Christ alone dwells all the fullness of the Godhead. This affirmation and certainty comes from an authentic knowledge of God. On this basis, it is understandable that our Christian faith has a character and value that surpasses any religious tradition or human school of thought.

False doctrines threaten the faith because they come from "another spirit" and mislead people. We must make a clear distinction between people who, having had the Christian faith, turn away from it in favour of another religion or current, and those who, in a process of searching for God, encounter certain belief systems until, finally and by grace, they come to the true knowledge of God. This is what happened to St Augustine, for

example. But once he had experienced his conversion, he turned away from the errors of those beliefs in which he had previously been.

But in this case St Paul is addressing the faithful who are in danger of turning away from the true faith they have already received. In this way, he is also speaking to us who are trying to follow the Lord faithfully. We cannot close our eyes to the fact that false doctrines are being spread in our Holy Church, which do not transmit the authentic and traditional faith, but proclaim human ideas.

Such teachings must not be listened to, for their poison may penetrate us if we do not forcefully reject them at the outset. Normally, such false teachers should be corrected by the competent authority of the Church, and under no circumstances should they be allowed to continue spreading their errors in the name of the Church. Unfortunately, however, this dimension of correction by pastors is being lost more and more, and false teachers are being allowed to continue.

If the fullness of divinity is truly in Christ alone, then all other religions are in great need of the proclamation of faith. And even more needy are those who have no faith at all. It would be a grave failure of charity to deprive them of the full message of the faith; it would also be a failure to fulfil the missionary mandate entrusted by the Lord to His Church (cf. Mt 28:19-20).

God wants people to come to know the true faith, and for this purpose He has sent us His own Son. For this reason, it is impossible for God to want the diversity of religions in the same positive way as He wanted the difference between male and female. It would be inconceivable that the Lord would want to leave people in their mistaken or incomplete knowledge of God. Rather, He wants all error to be overcome by the light of true doctrine, as was the case with St Augustine.

Remaining rooted in Christ and in the traditional faith is the true protection against all seduction. Remaining in Christ means keeping His commandments, receiving the sacraments in the right way, deeply embracing the Word of God, sincerely and perseveringly walking the path of sanctification, living in the "circumcision of Christ", to use St Paul's words... The latter means that we learn to listen to the guidance of the Holy Spirit and not to be carried away by the inclinations of our human nature without restraint.

It is very important that the Apostle Paul makes us see once again the value of our faith and its uniqueness, so that we do not fall into the spirit of relativism which is all around us and which is creeping into the Church. Holding on to the fullness and beauty of our faith does not mean in any way belittling other people and the faith they profess. It is simply a matter of faithfulness to the Lord, which will not allow us to fall back into pagan practices or to listen to doctrines that are not grounded in Christ. Nor can we relativise the truth of the Catholic faith and place it on the same level as other religions, on the pretext of promoting a kind of universal religion, as proposed, for example, by Masonic ideas.

To proclaim the faith and to remain in Christ is God's command, which we must fulfil with His grace, in humility and love. This is God's gift to humanity: we do not proclaim ourselves and our own philosophies, but we proclaim Christ who, on the Cross, cancelled the debt that was against us and overthrew the powers and authorities!