

24. September 2023

Living for the glorification of God

Phil 1:20c-24,27a

Christ will be honored in my body, whether by life or by death. For to me to live is Christ, and to die is gain. If it is to be life in the flesh, that means fruitful labor for me. Yet which I shall choose I cannot tell. I am hard pressed between the two. My desire is to depart and be with Christ, for that is far better. But to remain in the flesh is more necessary on your account. Only let your manner of life be worthy of the gospel of Christ.

The glorification of God! That is St. Paul's reason for living, and so he fulfils Christ's deepest desire, which is to glorify the Heavenly Father.

In the Message given to Mother Eugenia Ravasio in 1932 (https://fatherspeaks.net/eugenia_msg.html), which was acknowledged at the time by the local bishop and which I have often quoted, God the Father says the following:

"If men could penetrate the Heart of Jesus in all Its de-sires and Its glory, they would realize that Its most ardent desire is to glorify the Father, the One Who sent Him, and, most of all, not to let His glory be diminished as it has been until now. He desires the complete glory that men can and must give Me, as their Father and Maker, and still more as the Author of their Redemption!"

This perspective is essential for all of us. Are our deeds, thoughts and words directed towards the Lord, are we zealously seeking to give Him glory, and not seeking it for ourselves?

It is good to ask ourselves these questions, because they take us away from our "self" and focus our gaze on God. We should not be afraid to ask them. Rather, they are questions that can shake us up and push us in the right direction. In this way, we can be like our Lord and also like his faithful servant St. Paul, who in everything they did sought to glorify God.

In today's reading, the Apostle to the Gentiles reveals his longing to die in order to be fully with Christ. Having given his whole life to the service of God, he longs to enter into the fullness of life. But on the other hand, he is aware that the young Christian community still needs him. Thus he is able to put his longing for eternity on the back burner in order to continue to serve his own.

This conclusion of the Apostle shows how detached his life is from his own interests. His desire to be united with the Lord as soon as possible comes from the depths of his heart. There is nothing on a personal level that still keeps him tied to this world. All his earthly illusions have been extinguished, and he knew how to fight the noble fight and to keep the faith (cf. 2 Tim 4:7). Why should he remain in this world, when the glory of God awaits him? The only thing that still holds him back is the certainty that he can continue to bear fruit in this world. This shows both his love for the young Church and his detachment from himself. Thus, knowing that he can still glorify God through his apostolic ministry, St Paul is able to set aside even his desire to be united soon to the Lord.

This detachment from self is essential to the spiritual life. It will be easier to achieve if we are focused on the glorification of the Lord. St. Nicholas of Flüe, the patron saint of Switzerland, summed up the classic spiritual path in this precious prayer:

"My Lord and my God, take from me everything that distances me from You.
My Lord and my God, give me everything that brings me closer to You.
My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to You. Amen."

Especially the last part of this prayer is very much related to today's theme. To serve the Lord selflessly and to seek only His glorification is a high goal. Jesus showed us the ultimate expression of selflessness on Calvary, in His Crucifixion. The Apostle Paul also gives us a great example of this in today's reading.

The prayer of St. Nicholas shows us the way to that goal. Love for God gives us the strength to detach ourselves from everything that hinders the full unfolding of this love. The second request of the prayer - "give me everything that brings me closer to You" - will not go unheeded by the Lord. With our eyes fixed on the glorification of God and on the service of our neighbour; with our efforts directed towards the transformation of our own heart and the faithful fulfilment of the tasks entrusted to us in this world...

With this attitude it will be possible to realise in our life also that last supplication which St. Nicholas utters in his prayer: "My Lord and my God, detach me from myself to give my all to You".