

7. October 2023

Trust in God in dark hours

Bar 4:5-12,27-29

Take courage, my people, memorial of Israel! You were sold to the nations, but not for extermination. You provoked God; and so were delivered to your enemies, since you had angered your Creator by offering sacrifices to demons, and not to God. You had forgotten the eternal God who reared you. You had also grieved Jerusalem who nursed you, for when she saw God's anger falling on you, she said: Listen, you neighbours of Zion: God has sent me great sorrow. I have seen my sons and daughters taken into captivity, which the Eternal brought down on them. I had reared them joyfully; in tears, in sorrow, I watched them go away. Do not, any of you, exult over me, a widow, deserted by so many; I am bereaved because of the sins of my children, who turned away from the Law of God. Take courage, my children, call on God: he who brought this on you will remember you. As by your will you first strayed from God, so now turn back and search for him ten times harder; for as he has been bringing down those disasters on you, so will he rescue you and give you eternal joy.

A Trust in God is a key concept so that the relationship with God can unfold its full fruitfulness. The Lord Himself invites the People of Israel to trust in Him, in the midst of great suffering. His people must become aware of their choice and never forget that they are God's people and what the Lord has done for them, drawing them lovingly to Himself.

Now, the sufferings that the Israelites endure are a consequence of their turning away from God. And He, moved precisely by love, allows the people to experience firsthand what it means to turn their backs and turn to idols. Instead of serving the Lord, they had fallen into the snares of demons, so that their knowledge of God was obscured.

It is often difficult for us men to trust God; even more so when we find ourselves in difficult situations. One of the most serious consequences of original sin was that we lost the close and trusting relationship we originally had with God in Paradise. And this is precisely what the Lord invites us to do again and again: there are so many passages in the New Testament that speak of this trust! In the person of Jesus, who gave His life

for us, we are shown the extent to which God loves people, and how He is willing to go to the extreme in this love. In view of this, trust can be revived to a great depth.

By regaining trust in God and increasing it day by day, we can better understand and accept everything that happens to us. This applies precisely to those situations which are beyond our control and which are painful for us. We will not always be able to see them with the clarity with which the Lord presents them to His people through the prophet in today's reading. There will be many situations that remain for us in the shadows, including situations that go far beyond the personal dimension. However, in any circumstance and even when the need becomes overwhelming, we are to put into practice the exhortation of today's reading, *"Take courage, my children, call on God!"*

Not a few Catholics today are worried about the Church. Some realise that a spirit of confusion is spreading and wonder what could be the causes... The conclusions and interpretations reached by some differ widely and sometimes even contradict each other. Other Catholics don't even notice the confusion.

This is probably always the case... Not everyone smells the danger that wolves bring when they invade the flock. That is why the sheep need shepherds to warn them and tell them how to deal with the threat. However, things become very difficult when those who are called to exercise the ministry of pastors have fallen into confusion; when they no longer identify the dangers or relativise them, and, in any case, fail to bring them to the attention of the flock entrusted to them.

In such circumstances, the Word of God becomes the great counsellor for the faithful. As far as the Church is concerned, we can trust God to bring her safely out of the present crisis. It is His Church and the Lord will watch over her! Thus, these times become a test: either we cling to the faith as it has been handed down to us by Tradition; or we allow ourselves to be drawn into fields which are alien to our holy faith, and which, after all, are influenced by demons.

Certainly the present confusion in the Church is also a consequence of many sins; a consequence of having turned away from the ways of God; a consequence of the weakening of faith; a consequence of having opened up to the world in an unreflective way; among many other things...

In this context, too, the Word of God offers us advice!

If we lament the present situation in the Church, we should internalise and put into practice this exhortation from today's reading in order to counteract this desolate state: *"so now turn back and search for him ten times harder"*. Perhaps then the Lord will shorten the time of trial, and a time of consolation will come again!