

12. October 2023

## Beyond justice

Mal 3:13-18

*“Your words have been stout against me, says the Lord. Yet you say, ‘How have we spoken against thee?’ You have said, ‘It is vain to serve God. What is the good of our keeping his charge or of walking as in mourning before the Lord of hosts? Henceforth we deem the arrogant blessed; evildoers not only prosper but when they put God to the test they escape.’” Then those who feared the Lord spoke with one another; the Lord heeded and heard them, and a book of remembrance was written before him of those who feared the Lord and thought on his name. “They shall be mine, says the Lord of hosts, my special possession on the day when I act, and I will spare them as a man spares his son who serves him. Then once more you shall distinguish between the righteous and the wicked, between one who serves God and one who does not serve him.*

It is a great delusion to think that one can live without a deep search for truth. Though it may seem to work, there remains a void deep within the soul because it was created for God. The delusion goes even further when one believes that it makes no difference whether one serves God or not; when one has a false concept of God's patience, as if it meant that a person could do or not do as he or she pleases without the Lord intervening.

But for those who try to follow God's ways, it can sometimes be difficult to understand why He waits so long to apply His justice. We hear this question in the Psalms, it is expressed by the disciples (cf. Lk 9:54) and it is also echoed in Revelation (6:10).

But today's reading invites us to great patience and deep trust: everything is and will remain in God's hands!

We humans have a longing for justice, and in this sense it is legitimate to ask the Lord why the evil and the wicked seem to live well, while the righteous often suffer much. This does not mean that we fall into a kind of Pharisaism that emphasises our own

merits and compares them with the actions of others... But such questions may arise from the depths of our soul, or it may be other people who raise these doubts.

As Christians, we go beyond seeking to restore justice for our own sake. Our eyes are opened and we are concerned about those who do evil and do not live according to God's commandments. What will happen to them if they do not repent of what they are doing? How will they stand before God if their lives are entangled in sin? Will conversion be possible if pride has penetrated deep into the heart of the person?

By looking to the mercy of God, who longs for the conversion of the sinner, we become "our brother's keeper" (cf. Gen 4:9). It is God's love that is ready to do everything to save the sinner and the lost! And love becomes our motivation! In God's love, we learn to put ourselves aside in order to go in search of the lost.

We see that in the coming of our Lord into the world a new level of charity is manifested. Instead of just applying justice, God opens His heart wide to the lost... The need for justice remains, for a sinner and wrongdoer will not be able to hide his wrongdoing. But God's love goes so far that He gives Himself to humanity on the cross, offering forgiveness for all their sins. The Lord Himself took upon Himself the burden of guilt, thus restoring all justice. All that remains is for a person to accept the offer of grace and be converted.

The pious believer not only rejoices in justice, but also in the conversion of the sinner. The prodigal son is welcomed by his father and a great feast is celebrated in his honour (cf. Lk 15:11-32). God's love and patience follow us in all our ways, always waiting for our conversion so that we may not be lost.