

30. October 2023

## Led by the Spirit of God

Rom 8:12-17

*'So then, my brothers, we have no obligation to human nature to be dominated by it. If you do live in that way, you are doomed to die; but if by the Spirit you put to death the habits originating in the body, you will have life. All who are guided by the Spirit of God are sons of God; for what you received was not the spirit of slavery to bring you back into fear; you received the Spirit of adoption, enabling us to cry out, 'Abba, Father!' The Spirit himself joins with our spirit to bear witness that we are children of God. And if we are children, then we are heirs, heirs of God and joint-heirs with Christ, provided that we share his suffering, so as to share his glory'.*

One of the fundamental aspects of the Christian life is the reconquest of our freedom from the inclinations of our human nature. As long as we are its slaves, we lack the capacity to listen to the voice of the Spirit and to follow its motions. That is why mortification is part of the basic equipment of an authentic spiritual life. By mortification, we mean restraining and overcoming our disordered inclinations. Without it, our spiritual life will atrophy and will not be able to unfold properly.

We must not allow ourselves to be misled by certain current trends - which unfortunately also exist in the Church - that tell us that we do not need to make an effort to change, because our human nature is good and we only need to improve it a little. This is an illusion, which will make us fall into spiritual lethargy and succumb to self-deception!

We must be aware that the restraint and struggle against our evil inclinations is a long-term task, which requires us to be ever vigilant. We may start off on the right foot, but over time we let our guard down, so that the bad habits we thought we had overcome will find a place in us again.

Certainly there can be exaggerations in the ascetic life, perhaps coming from a mistaken view, as if Creation is flawed and the use of earthly goods is in itself negative. This is not so! But it is equally wrong to ignore the reality of our fallen nature, which succumbs to its evil inclinations until it is restrained by the Spirit of God and with our cooperation.

On the other hand, if we face the challenge of the spiritual life, cooperating in our sanctification accordingly, there will be nothing to stand in the way. Then the glorious

Spirit of God can lead us into an intimate relationship with our Heavenly Father.

Through the Holy Spirit we recognise that we are children of God (1 Jn 3:1). Whatever remains of servility and fear in our relationship with Him will be overcome by the power of love (cf. 1 Jn 4:18). For the Holy Spirit, who is the love between the Father and the Son, makes us understand what we really are in God's eyes: His beloved children and co-heirs of His Kingdom. In His light, we will be able to perceive this reality, thus losing any false fear.

God always remains faithful to us, and never withdraws His love from us. If we are in sin, He will knock at our door, to call us back home so that we can embrace His love and live in it. If we sincerely strive to follow Him, the Holy Spirit will penetrate us with His love, indwell us and mould us into the image of Christ.

This is what the way of sanctification is all about, through which God can shine more and more in our lives, so that our words and deeds reflect Him.

Day by day we must listen to the Spirit of God and live in intimate communion with Him. The Holy Spirit is willing to purify all that hinders us from welcoming Him in us and living with Him, as long as we ask Him to do so and are willing to allow the necessary purifications, actively cooperating in them.

Unfortunately many people do not understand that purifications and the fight against disordered passions are also an expression of God's love. He does not want to feed us only with mother's milk, but wants to give us solid food (cf. 1 Cor 3:2), so that our love may be strong and capable of suffering, so that we may become more and more like the Lord.