

## 6. November 2023

### The wisdom of God

Rom 11:29-36

*For the gifts and the call of God are irrevocable. Just as you were once disobedient to God but now have received mercy because of their disobedience, so they have now been disobedient in order that by the mercy shown to you they also may[a] receive mercy. For God has consigned all men to disobedience, that he may have mercy upon all. O the depth of the riches and wisdom and knowledge of God! How unsearchable are his judgments and how inscrutable his ways! “For who has known the mind of the Lord, or who has been his counselor?” “Or who has given a gift to him that he might be repaid?” For from him and through him and to him are all things. To him be glory for ever. Amen.*

Who can know the ways of the Lord? It is good to ask ourselves this question in order to try to clarify it from different perspectives.

In today's reading, St Paul's wonder at the ways of the Lord refers to the manner in which He has prepared salvation for all peoples. This is a theme that deeply touched the Apostle to the Gentiles. A Jew who had persecuted Christians, he was later, by the grace of God, able to see the truth and experience true conversion after the decisive encounter with Christ. How much he must have thought about the whole work of salvation! The Lord gave him much light to understand His ways, certainly more than many people of his time.

No doubt St Paul suffered greatly from the fact that so many Jews did not share his faith in Jesus and were even suspicious of Christians and persecuted them. In another passage, he expresses in moving words all that he would be willing to endure if only the Jews would come to the true knowledge of God (cf. Rom 9:1-5).

But in the midst of this suffering, he understood that God had not abandoned His people in spite of their disobedience, but was still trying to lead them to salvation in the way that only He knew. This is what Paul is trying to say when he says that they (the Jews) will also receive mercy.

Who can know the ways of the Lord?

In all humility we must reply that no creature is capable of this, for our understanding cannot encompass the complexity of life in its fullness. As creatures, our knowledge is

limited, and it makes no sense for us to try to understand God with the limitations of our understanding.

But God comes to our aid through the Holy Spirit, the third person of the Trinity! He, being God, knows His ways and enables us to understand them to the extent that it matters to us. The most important thing the Holy Spirit teaches us is to know that God's ways are always right, that is, that His purposes are always love and truth.

When we come to this certainty, we have taken a decisive step in understanding God's plans. When we stand firm in the conviction that His ways are always right, we will be able to face in a different way the many abysses that exist in human life and in history over the centuries.

We know by faith that man often does not accept God's will and does not do it, but clings to his own ideas and desires, does not understand things properly, allows himself to be deceived, and so on. Then there is the conscious rebellion against God by the devil and the creatures who resemble him in their wickedness.

But God is able to integrate even this dramatic reality into His plan of salvation, which is incomprehensible to us human beings unless God Himself gives us a special light to understand it.

With the light of faith, however, we cling to the omnipotence and infinite goodness of God, and so the fundamentals of God's ways are revealed to us. Nothing is hidden from the Lord; He directs all things for good; His actions are always moved by love and truth...

These fundamental questions of our faith come very naturally to us and we would not hesitate to affirm them. But if we internalise them and allow them to permeate our way of thinking and feeling, they will be a great light of the Holy Spirit and a key to praising God's plans with all our heart. If we have this attitude, perhaps the Lord will give us more clarity in understanding certain difficult circumstances, discovering His saving action everywhere, even if we do not always have logical explanations for every circumstance.

Through faith we will be able to look at the past, the present and the future with confidence, for the One who holds everything in His hands will know how to use everything for our good.