

3. December 2023

You, Lord, are our Father

Is 63:16b-17.19b; 64:2b-7

After all, you are our Father. If Abraham will not own us, if Israel will not acknowledge us, you, Lord, are our Father, 'Our Redeemer' is your name from of old. Why, Lord, do you let us wander from your ways and let our hearts grow too hard to fear you? Return, for the sake of your servants, the tribes of your heritage. We have long been like those you do not rule, people who do not bear your name. Oh, that you would tear the heavens open and come down -- in your presence the mountains would quake. Never has anyone heard, no ear has heard, no eye has seen any god but you act like this for the sake of those who trust him. You come to meet those who are happy to act uprightly; keeping your ways reminds them of you. Yes, you have been angry and we have been sinners; now we persist in your ways and we shall be saved. We have all been like unclean things and our upright deeds like filthy rags. We wither, all of us, like leaves, and all our misdeeds carry us off like the wind. There is no one to invoke your name, to rouse himself to hold fast to you, for you have hidden your face from us and given us up to the power of our misdeeds. And yet, Lord, you are our Father; we the clay and you our potter, all of us are the work of your hands.

It is moving to hear this heartfelt lament, a true search for God and a humble confession of one's own guilt. These words express a deep desire to live again in union with God. Someone is speaking from the depths of his heart, and the veil will undoubtedly be torn, for God, in His love, will never turn a deaf ear to such a sincere cry. It is the Spirit of God Himself who inspires these words and this repentance in the person to lead him to the open heart of the Heavenly Father.

We must distinguish between the active and the permissive will of God, because we know very well that He can never want people to turn away from His ways and harden their hearts. However, He allows them to feel the consequences of their apostasy so that they may realise this and take the path of repentance, for only then can they experience salvation.

Hardened hearts are those that have closed themselves to love and truth. From a spiritual point of view, their condition is deplorable. They do not fear God as they should, nor can

they open themselves to His love. Anything to do with God is seen as a threat, and they often seem trapped in a kind of destructive self-assertion. They urgently need our prayers so that they do not remain in this state.

In today's reading, however, we do not see this final hardening. On the contrary, the errors are admitted and the estrangement from God is perceived with pain.

The prophet wants to remind the Lord of His promises, His love for His people, His righteousness, while acknowledging the limitations and transgressions of the people: *“We all withered like foliage, our faults took us away like the wind. No one called on your name or strove to cling to you; for you hid your face from us and delivered us into the power of our guilt”*.

After this heartfelt confession, comes the decisive turning point, which can make all past transgressions disappear: *“And yet, Lord, you are our Father”*.

By addressing God with these words, we touch the depths of His heart and look to Him with confidence. After all, He is the Father, who wants His children to live and be well. Our Father is always ready to forgive, as soon as a person turns away from their wrong ways and turns back to Him. This is what today's reading reminds us of.

When we turn to the Father, we begin to live and awaken from the sleep of confusion. God restores us and wants to forgive all our sins. Then comes the time of consolation (cf. Acts 3:20).

May all those who still have a hardened heart hear Him, so that they may humbly open themselves to their Father and simply say to Him, *“But you, Lord, are our father”*.