

15. December 2023

A burning heart

Isa 48:17-19

Thus says Yahweh, your redeemer, the Holy One of Israel: I am Yahweh your God and teach you for your own good, I lead you in the way you ought to go. If only you had listened to my commandments! Your prosperity would have been like a river and your saving justice like the waves of the sea. Your descendants would have been numbered like the sand, your offspring as many as its grains. Their name would never be cancelled or blotted out from my presence.

People often wonder why there are so many problems in the world, or why so many misfortunes can occur in their personal lives. Unfortunately, the question of whether one is walking in the ways that correspond to God's will is rarely asked. It seems that this question no longer exists today, or that it has less and less relevance.

A life without God, ignoring the deepest reason for our existence; a life opposed to God's commandments... What disorientation!

In His mercy, God is unceasingly searching for man; and in His love He has done and continues to do everything to reach him. But he who does not question God's ways and does not learn what truly serves him, nor listen to the voice of the Lord, will remain in certain misery.

Today's readings lament with poignant words: *"If only you had listened to my commandments!"* we hear in Isaiah's text. And the psalm of the day exclaims, *"How blessed is anyone who rejects the advice of the wicked and does not take a stand in the path that sinners tread, nor a seat in company with cynics"* (Ps 1:1).

How will it be for God to see that people do not accept His grace? Jesus gives us an answer to this question! He weeps over Jerusalem, because she did not recognise the hour of grace and the time of Her visitation, so that she could not receive all that He wanted to give her as the Son of God and Messiah (cf. Lk 19:41-44).

What would have happened if she had accepted the hour of grace? Today's reading gives us an idea: *"Your prosperity would have been like a river and your saving justice like the waves*

of the sea. Your offspring would have been like the sand”.

Perhaps we too have been in the situation of seeing a person let his life pass him by without accepting the hand that God holds out to him. Perhaps it is a person very close to us, perhaps even in our own family... Possibly he is not wicked, nor does he intentionally do evil. However, we may notice that his life is not fulfilled, that he cannot resolve certain situations, that problems are piling up....

This hurts! On the one hand, it hurts for the Lord, for we see how hard He tries to show man the right way, but His love is not returned. On the other hand, it hurts also for the person in question, for he is turning away from the true life. And it hurts also for ourselves, because we cannot have a relationship with them as children of the same God.

How different his life could be, how grace could unfold in him, freeing him from all the chains that bind him!

If we are not indifferent towards the other person and love him or her as our neighbour in a Christian way, then we should be burning with the zeal to do our part so that people can meet Jesus. But perhaps we ourselves are not so aware of the enormous gift we have received in faith; of the enormous grace of knowing God's commandments and of striving to keep them.

In our way of discipleship, it is important that we internalise again and again these healing words of the Lord, so that they fill us with gratitude and make us burn with that zeal for the salvation of people. Let us think of the missionaries, who were willing to go through long ways and toil in order to bring the gospel to people.

If we consider how many people still need to be touched by the Gospel and how many still need to be re-evangelised, we can see that we are faced with a Herculean task. Even in a small circle it is difficult enough! But here it will help us to look to the Holy Spirit. He is the evangeliser, He is the one who knows all the ways of the Lord and He is the one who invites us to cooperate in His work.

St. Therese of the Child Jesus once said: "In the heart of the Church, my mother, I will be love". In her heart burned the desire to be a great missionary, and her desire was fulfilled and she became "patroness of the missions"!

In the same way, we too can place our burning desire for mission in the Heart of God and in the Heart of our beloved Mother. And if we are not yet ardent enough, even though we

recognise how important it is, let us ask the Holy Spirit to give us a burning heart. And if we are totally indifferent, all the more reason to turn to the Spirit of God, asking Him to awaken us from our lethargy.

He will then show us where our place is, where we can best serve God and mankind.