

5. February 2024

## Overcoming pride and arrogance

1 Cor 1:26-31

Reading for the memorial of Saint Agatha

*For consider your call, brethren; not many of you were wise according to worldly standards, not many were powerful, not many were of noble birth; but God chose what is foolish in the world to shame the wise, God chose what is weak in the world to shame the strong, God chose what is low and despised in the world, even things that are not, to bring to nothing things that are, so that no human being might boast in the presence of God. He is the source of your life in Christ Jesus, whom God made our wisdom, our righteousness and sanctification and redemption; therefore, as it is written, "Let him who boasts, boast of the Lord."*

The criteria by which God chooses may be very different from what we imagine. We tend to look at people's appearances and admire their extraordinary qualities, but in the kingdom of God things are different! The Lord sees the heart of people and often reveals His glory in those who are weak in the eyes of the world; in those who are seemingly "nobodies" or hidden from the world.

If we meditate on today's reading, we can see that God wants to save us from pride, which hinders the unfolding of grace because it is focused only on the person.

In order to follow Christ and advance spiritually, it is essential that we recognize pride and arrogance in ourselves, even in its most subtle manifestations. This will determine to a great extent whether we will respond to God's grace or whether, on the contrary, we will slow it down considerably or even become an obstacle to it. Often we are not aware of our pride because we are not accustomed to examining our inner self. Or maybe we only notice it when we feel that our heart is already closed, when we become aggressive, when we speak badly about others and make derogatory comments about them... Hopefully, at least then we will notice our pride, so that we can take the necessary measures!

But we must be aware that it has very deep roots. It begins to work when we give in to our thoughts of vanity; when we compare ourselves with other people in order to get ahead; when we seek the praise of others and enjoy it when we receive it; when we want to attract attention and be the center of attention; when we think we are better because of our education, our abilities, our beauty, our family, our nationality, or our profession; because of a spiritual position, because of our religiosity, etc... instead of thanking God and giving Him the glory.

In short, every time we look at ourselves and seek our own glory, pride is already at work. In fact, pride will always find an open door when our eyes are not focused on the Lord and we are not consciously seeking His glory in everything we do, whatever it may be. When this happens, the focus is on ourselves, and then we get caught up in our own "self" and gladly accept the attention of others.

Pride is truly an evil, and it is so ingrained that we often don't even realize it. There is an Arabic saying: "It is easier to see a black beetle on a black stone in a black night than to see pride in one's own heart".

And the problem is that one is too proud to want to discover the pride in one's heart. It is as if we have placed a guard at the entrance to reject any attempt that could lead us to a knowledge of ourselves in this respect.

For this reason, it is understandable that the spiritual fathers give so much importance to the theme of pride, insistently inviting us to enter the school of humility.

Today's reading clearly shows us how important it is for humans not to boast before God. It is a profound paradox that we misuse the wonderful gifts we have received from Him, whether natural or supernatural, to build up our honor and image before others.

It is part of our fallen nature to want to have false worth before others and before ourselves. Unfortunately, we tend to look for that value in the wrong place, for never is man so great as when he worships God; never is he more filled with divine grace than when he strives to have a pure heart and tries to overcome his pride; never can he be more valuable to others than when he serves them in the Lord without seeking anything for himself.

In mentioning these three aspects of the true greatness of man, we have already indicated some of the means of growing in humility: to adore God and give Him the glory in everything; to purify the heart and allow God to purify it; to listen to the Holy Spirit and practice works of charity toward one's neighbor.