

9. February 2024

## Division as a consequence of sin

1 Kgs 11:29-32; 12:19

*One day when Jeroboam had gone out of Jerusalem, the prophet Ahijah of Shiloh accosted him on the road. Ahijah was wearing a new cloak; the two of them were in the open country by themselves. Ahijah took the new cloak which he was wearing and tore it into twelve strips, saying to Jeroboam: 'Take ten strips for yourself, for Yahweh, God of Israel, says this, "I am going to tear the kingdom from Solomon's hand and give ten tribes to you. He will keep one tribe for the sake of my servant David and for the sake of Jerusalem, the city which I have chosen out of all the tribes of Israel. And Israel has remained in rebellion against the House of David from that day to this.*

Following on from yesterday's reading, today's reading presents us with the consequence of Solomon's sin. The kingdom, which had been united under his father David and under himself, is divided and, as the Lord foretold, Jeroboam becomes king over most of the kingdom.

Here we can see that one of the consequences of sin is division.

This reminds us of the great consequence of original sin, which severely disrupted man's unity with God, thus bringing about the primordial catastrophe in human existence.

Original sin is the starting point of all division (if we do not address the previous sin of the fallen angels), and we could consider the history of sin as a history of constant division, affecting all areas of human life: families, communities, nations and even the Church.

We can also discover this division resulting from sin within ourselves. Before the original fall, there was a perfect harmony in man, brought about by God: the Lord enlightened the intellect, so that it could direct the will. The feelings were at the service of the execution of the will. From the time of the fall into sin, on the other hand, a disorder entered into human life which St. Paul describes in these terms: *"I see that acting on my*

*body there is a different law which battles against the law in my mind. So I am brought to be a prisoner of that law of sin which lives inside my body" (Rom 7:23).*

From this perspective, we can well understand why the Lord said that *"Every kingdom divided against itself is heading for ruin"* (Mt 12:25). Our own experience confirms this!

The big question is: how then can we serve true unity?

First of all, we must be clear that true unity among people can only be restored in God, since we have lost it precisely because of our break with Him. Through the grace of Christ, who forgives our faults, and through the work of the Holy Spirit, who works on the consequences of inner division, the inner integrity of the person is restored in the first instance. This is why the path of sanctification is so important, because it causes the understanding to be enlightened; the will to be strengthened; and the feelings to be ordered to the service of truth.

Every effort is worthwhile, for by our personal struggle, which is what we call 'asceticism', we are already cooperating in the unity of mankind. If we ourselves gradually regain our inner integrity and the Holy Spirit is able to exert His influence on us more and more, we are already participating in God's great work, which is to lead humanity back to the Father's House. It is the Spirit of God who then moves us to pass on the Gospel, to dispose people to order their lives before God and to be converted to Him. This is why the Church must tirelessly pass on the Gospel, because unity on the human and political level is very fragile if it is not the Holy Spirit who transforms people's hearts.

At this point, we must also warn against the disastrous illusion of trying to create unity between people on a purely human level. The root and depth of the division has not been understood here, and above all, it has not been recognised that in order to achieve unity it is essential to accept the Redemption worked by Christ and consequently to undertake the process of inner transformation.

Another essential point is the forgiveness of sins. When we ourselves receive forgiveness, we become capable of forgiving others, thus breaking the cycle of division through reconciliation. As men reconciled to God, we also become people who are willing to forgive, so that we can provide the remedy against continuing division. This implies

that we are vigilant in avoiding all sin, and that, if we have failed to do so, we immediately seek reconciliation with God and with the persons concerned.

Those who consciously follow Christ should be able to become instruments of peace. This means that they themselves should not be a cause of division because of their own sins. Thus, Christians can cooperate in the reconciliation of humanity with God. This can happen also in secret: in prayer, by working in one's own heart, by promoting reconciliation in the family, at work, in the Church, etc. God offers us all remedies, so that confused and divided humanity can find the way to true peace. And our small contribution, wherever God has placed us, is precious to the Lord.