

10. February 2024

## Everything comes from Him!

1 Kgs 12:26-32; 13:33-34

*In those days, Jeroboam thought to himself, 'As things are, the kingdom will revert to the House of David. If this people continues to go up to the Temple of Yahweh in Jerusalem to offer sacrifices, the people's heart will turn back again to their lord, Rehoboam king of Judah, and they will put me to death.' So the king thought this over and then made two golden calves; he said to the people, 'You have been going up to Jerusalem long enough. Here is your God, Israel, who brought you out of Egypt!' He set one up at Bethel, and the people went in procession in front of the other one all the way to Dan. In Israel this gave rise to sin, for the people went to Bethel to worship the one, and all the way to Dan to worship the other. He set up shrines on the high places and appointed priests from ordinary families, who were not of levitical descent. Jeroboam also instituted a feast in the eighth month, on the fifteenth of the month, like the feast kept in Judah, when he offered sacrifices on the altar. This he did at Bethel, offering sacrifices to the calves which he had made and, at Bethel, installing the priests of the high places which he had set up. Jeroboam did not give up his wicked ways after this incident, but went on appointing priests for the high places from the common people. He consecrated as priests of the high places any who wished to be. Such conduct made the House of Jeroboam a sinful House, and caused its ruin and extinction from the face of the earth.*

Today's reading shows us an abuse of religion for matters of politics; or, rather, for one's own ambition for power. This is a more than serious matter, because here the most sacred thing is being abused for one's own interests. So it is not only that the person who commits such an abuse is confused or blind, or that he himself is not a believer, but that he intends to deceive God and the believing people. And he evidently does so quite consciously.

How can one turn so far away from God?

In the story of Solomon, we heard that it was the seduction of his wives that caused him to fall into idolatry. Evidently, his weakness before the beauty and attraction of women

became his undoing. This reminds us, no doubt, of the sin of his father David (2 Sam 11), who deeply repented before God and was forgiven by Him (2 Sam 12:13).

In the case of Jeroboam, we see the fear of losing power as well as the fear of losing his own life. The combination of these two elements constitutes a deadly danger!

The seduction of power is deeply rooted in man, and connects him spiritually with Lucifer's rebellion against God. Power seems to confer upon man a supposed greatness and quasi-divinity. One becomes intoxicated in power, and power introduces the person into an unreal existence, which consists in the belief that, by virtue of his power, he could do practically everything, without being accountable to God and, in a sense, without being accountable to people either.

Lucifer didn't want to serve; he wanted to be like God. So it is something like a delirium, in which one enters a sick world, a product of one's own illusions, which exalt oneself beyond measure.

In the case of Jeroboam, not only does the fear of losing power come into play, but in the loss of power he sees his own life threatened. Hence his actions are even more rash and blind to the reality of God. Thus Jeroboam becomes a seducer of the Israelites, and even institutes as priests all those who desire it, thus perverting this noble ministry.

The result: Jeroboam's house was destroyed because of sin. It is sad to hear that at that time no one opposed him and that even the priests obeyed his instructions to worship idols.

So much for the biblical account....

Far more tragic than weakness is pride, and the ambition for power that accompanies it! It is easier for man to become aware of his weakness, sometimes ashamed, than to perceive his ambition for power and prestige. Wanting to be great for its own sake is a tremendous evil! It will not always go to the extreme as in the case of Jeroboam; but it can be an attitude that dwells very subtly in the heart of man.

In His example and in His words, the Lord offered us the remedy to this evil: the true dominion which pleases God and which He Himself exercises, is service out of love:

*"The greatest among you must be your servant"* (Mt 23:11). For us men, that means to live constantly facing God, knowing that we are accountable to Him.

Here we must be very attentive to ourselves, asking the Lord to overcome every ambition for power and every pride in our hearts, so that no flattery - whether from without or from within - can corrupt us. The daily interiorisation that everything has been given to us by God and the humble recognition of our own limitations will make us realistic, thus freeing us from the delirium of our supposed greatness.

Looking to and imitating Mary is a remedy for "Jeroboam's disease". Instead of seeking her own greatness and, like Lucifer, not wanting to serve, Our Lady says: *"You see before you the Lord's servant, let it happen to me as you have said"* (Lk 1:38); and later: *"My soul proclaims the greatness of the Lord (...) because he has looked upon the humiliation of his servant"* (v. 46.48).

Here is the answer to every desire for prestige, to every Luciferian ambition for power and to every form of self-indulgence!