

11. February 2024

A life project in a few words

1 Cor 10:31–11:1

So, whether you eat or drink, or whatever you do, do all to the glory of God. Give no offense to Jews or to Greeks or to the church of God, just as I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved. Be imitators of me, as I am of Christ.

It is crucial that the Word of God truly touches our hearts and moves us to change our lives. Every Christian is called to allow the Word of God to work in him in such a way that it bears abundant fruit.

In fact, each sentence of this short reading from St Paul could become a maxim for us.

"Do all to the glory of God".

If we put these words into practice, we will also make a reality of St Benedict's exhortation to become ever more aware of God's presence. Under this maxim, how much we will be freed and how much we will gain! Our whole life will be transformed, because on the one hand we will attentively avoid everything that displeases the Lord (which is the result of the gift of the fear of God), and on the other hand we will seek everything that pleases Him (which is the result of the gift of piety).

This will be a path of inner detachment that will lead to the great freedom that God wants to give to His children; a path of great attention to the guidance of the Holy Spirit. With this thought we can begin our day when we wake up, and in the evening make an examination of our conscience to see if we have found the "thread of the day", so to speak, or if, on the contrary, we have lost it, forgotten it or neglected it because we have been distracted by many other things. Putting this into practice may be more difficult than it seems, at least if we want to do it with full awareness.

Let us now reflect on the following words from the reading:

"I try to please all men in everything I do, not seeking my own advantage, but that of many, that they may be saved".

This phrase can also define our whole life, freeing us from our own "I". St Paul concentrates on the most important thing, which is to lead people to Christ. Everything else is subordinate to this primary goal - this is the guiding principle of his life!

In this context, it is important that St Paul makes us see the essential. In him burns the fire of wanting all people to be saved. We could ask ourselves what the Apostle of the Gentiles would say about the situation in many parts of the Church: has the apostolic zeal that inspired so many missionaries throughout history been lost, or do people today no longer need to be saved, or can everyone find salvation in their own way, in their own religion and with their own world view? Sometimes it seems that this is the dominant tendency in the Church today.

But things have not changed. The proclamation of the Gospel, together with one's own sanctification, remains the central task of Christians. In fulfilling this mission we give glory to God.

Therefore, within the context in which we find ourselves, we must look at the situation as a whole, as St Paul recommends. Looking at the whole situation means asking ourselves: what would most help the other person to encounter the Gospel, what is my part in making it easier for him or her?

This does not mean that we should be compelled to proclaim the Gospel by word of mouth at every moment and in every circumstance, for fear of the other person's condemnation or out of over-enthusiasm. What is required of us is inner vigilance to discern the right moment to share the Gospel.

Let us not forget that even good works, though valuable in themselves, reach their fullness only when people learn that God Himself is the author of all goodness and praise Him for it, according to the words of Jesus: *"Let your light so shine before men, that they may see your good works and give glory to your Father who is in heaven"* (Mt 5:16). In this way we will make it easier for people to come to God. If we do not relate everything to God, we run the risk of making the person who does the good deeds the centre of attention, rather than the bridge that leads people to the Lord.

Let us learn from St Paul to be touched by the Word of God in such a way that we put our whole life at its service.