

25. February 2023

LENTEN ITINERARY

Day 12: "The fight against greed and wrath"

Continuing the theme of fighting against vices, we will talk today about greed and wrath.

3. The fight against greed

John Cassian points out that this vice should be easier to fight, because its object is not rooted in our nature. However, if we have given greed a place, then, according to Cassian, it becomes a vice even more dangerous than the others, which is difficult to get rid of. St. Paul also states that *"The love of money is the root of all evils"* (1 Tim 6:10), because it can become the fuel for various other vices.

If one succumbs to greed, which applies not only to the lust for money but to all kinds of things, it begins to grow and promises a false security based on possessions. But, in reality, one falls more and more into its trap and the spirit becomes more and more preoccupied with increasing property.

For spiritual people it is particularly devastating not to overcome this vice. But also for those who live in the world these admonishing words of St. Paul are valid: "As long as we have food and clothing, we shall be content with that. People who long to be rich are a prey to trial; they get trapped into all sorts of foolish and harmful ambitions which plunge people into ruin and destruction. *'The love of money is the root of all evils' and there are some who, pursuing it, have wandered away from the faith and so given their souls any number of fatal wounds*" (1 Tim 6:8-10).

And the warning of the Lord Himself is very clear: *"You cannot be the slave both of God and of money"* (Mt 6:24).

Finally, let us listen to what our teacher Cassian tells us about the fight against greed: "Not only must we be careful with the possession of money, but the desire to possess it must be totally banished from the heart (...). Greed must be rooted out, for it is no use not having money if one longs to possess it."

4. Fighting wrath

Let us begin again by quoting John Cassian, who has accompanied us throughout this theme: "We must thoroughly extirpate the deadly poison of wrath to the very depths of our soul (...), otherwise we will no longer be capable of clear judgement, we will no longer know how to be moderate, we will lose the sensitivity for contemplation, we will be immature in giving advice, we will neither live nor persevere in justice, for we will not be able to accept the spiritual and true light within us".

Holy Scripture is clearly against wrath, unless it is the "holy wrath" that inflamed Jesus when he drove the merchants out of the Temple. St Paul exhorts us: "*Any bitterness or bad temper or anger or shouting or abuse must be far removed from you - as must every kind of malice*" (Eph 4:31).

This should be easy for us to understand, but we really need to be aware of it. We cannot overcome our anger and rage if we still justify it, if we defend it, if we feed it with wrong thoughts and feelings, if we blame others for our anger.

To fight effectively against our vices, a spiritual attitude is required. Our will must be focused on advancing spiritually; that is, growing in love.

Having this spiritual attitude, one takes a certain distance from oneself and learns to see oneself through God's eyes. On the one hand, we experience comfort and mercy in the midst of our weaknesses; but on the other hand, we are also stimulated to do our part so that we can be transformed and modelled on the image of the Lord.

As for the struggle against unjustified and uncontrolled anger, we are to bring all our emotions to God, asking Him to touch them. If we do this with perseverance, again and again, we will learn to master ourselves in such a way that at least the anger does not manifest itself outwardly. But we must not be satisfied with this first achievement; anger must be nipped in the bud. This requires a firm decision on our part and the grace of God.

Tomorrow we will look at other vices against which we must fight....