

16. June 2024

Living in exile

2 Cor 5:6-10

We are always of good courage; we know that while we are at home in the body we are away from the Lord, for we walk by faith, not by sight. We are of good courage, and we would rather be away from the body and at home with the Lord. So whether we are at home or away, we make it our aim to please him. For we must all appear before the judgment seat of Christ, so that each one may receive good or evil, according to what he has done in the body.

Although these words were written in relation to the lives of the apostles, they apply to all people who have received the grace to know and follow Jesus. The Apostle Paul invites us to live with our eyes fixed on God and eternity.

Indeed, this is the orientation we need in order not to get caught up in our earthly life, so that our faith does not become sluggish and our walk does not become heavy. If our lives were too rooted in the earthly dimension and we lost the supernatural vision, where would we find security? It is this supernatural vision that makes us realistic in a spiritual sense: we are accountable for our lives first to God, and it is our honour to strive to please Him.

How much our lives would change if, as St Benedict recommends to his monks, we kept God present in everything we do! How responsible we would be with our words and gestures, taking every opportunity to do good, to bear Christian witness, to testify to God's love!

By putting into practice the advice of the Apostle in today's reading, our life becomes a spiritual life, because we understand more and more that the short time of our pilgrimage in this world is only a transit to the eternal homeland. We are still living in exile, in this mortal body, but the Lord will reward us richly if we have been faithful to Him in these difficult circumstances.

It is precisely when we accept this challenge out of love for our Heavenly Father, when we lift our eyes to Him and to the eternity that awaits us, that our earthly life - often marked by suffering and fatigue - is transformed from within and becomes for us a

purposeful and deliberate march towards eternity. Then we will no longer be burdened by this corruptible body. What brings about this decisive change in our earthly existence is the love of God, which has touched us and begun to transform us.

The last statement in today's reading is also an exhortation to be vigilant. The fact that nothing is hidden from the eyes of God and that all men will appear before the judgment seat of Christ should not be interpreted as a threat to frighten us, but should make us aware of the significance of our actions and of the reality in which we already live and towards which we are heading.

If we are not aware of this, we overlook a reality that should help us to make our lives as fruitful as possible. But even if one feels threatened by the Judgment Seat of Christ, it is better to be shaken by this fear and to reflect on one's own life, banishing all frivolity and indifference, than to fall or remain carelessly on a harmful course that can lead to the abyss.

This reading, as well as other passages from his letters, show that the Apostle Paul would have liked to go soon to his Lord, that is, to leave his mortal body. However, the Lord left him for a while in the young Church to continue his mission and to strengthen the faithful.

Even if we are already longing to reach our eternal home, may the Lord in His infinite wisdom make our lives fruitful until the last moment, so that we may confidently approach the Judgment Seat of Christ!