

19. July 2024

The friendship between God and Hezekiah

Is 38,1-6.21-22.7-8

In those days Hezeki'ah became sick and was at the point of death. And Isaiah the prophet the son of Amoz came to him, and said to him, "Thus says the Lord: Set your house in order; for you shall die, you shall not recover." Then Hezeki'ah turned his face to the wall, and prayed to the Lord, and said, "Remember now, O Lord, I beseech thee, how I have walked before thee in faithfulness and with a whole heart, and have done what is good in thy sight." And Hezeki'ah wept bitterly. Then the word of the Lord came to Isaiah: "Go and say to Hezeki'ah, Thus says the Lord, the God of David your father: I have heard your prayer, I have seen your tears; behold, I will add fifteen years to your life. I will deliver you and this city out of the hand of the king of Assyria, and defend this city. Now Isaiah had said, "Let them take a cake of figs, and apply it to the boil, that he may recover." Hezeki'ah also had said, "What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?" This is the sign to you from the Lord, that the Lord will do this thing that he has promised: Behold, I will make the shadow cast by the declining sun on the dial of Ahaz turn back ten steps." So the sun turned back on the dial the ten steps by which it had declined.

Clearly, Hezekiah was a friend of God, and he was one of the few good kings of Israel that Scripture tells us about. To be a friend of God is to live in intimate and trusting communion with Him. We know that Jesus called His disciples "friends": *"No longer do I call you servants, for the servant does not know what his master is doing; but I have called you friends, for all that I have heard from my Father I have made known to you"* (Jn 15:15).

A characteristic of this friendship is the sharing of certain things that one would not share with just anyone. This implies trust and the certainty that the friend loves us. This is how the Lord saw His disciples, and so He shared with them what He had heard from the Father, including them in the loving relationship between Him and the Heavenly Father. From this arises a deep intimacy... In these circumstances, a betrayal is all the more serious.

God was obviously pleased with Hezekiah. The reason for this complacency can be seen in the first question the king asked when he was told he was going to be healed: *“What is the sign that I shall go up to the house of the Lord?”*

Hezekiah wanted to go up to the house of the Lord! This is the key to friendship with God. One seeks Him, focuses one's life on Him and is aware of His presence. What is more, you know that the Lord understands you, to the very depths of your soul.

In any case, the Lord treats Hezekiah as a friend, prolongs his life by fifteen years and delivers him and his people from the hand of the king of Assyria.

These events invite us to reflect. In reality, the king's life was coming to an end, but he did not seem ready to die. Then, moved by His love for Hezekiah and out of compassion for His friend, the Lord changed the announcement He had made to him through the prophet.

Does not something similar often happen, albeit in a hidden way? Perhaps it is the many prayers and sacrifices of the faithful, that is, of those who live in friendship with God, which, thanks to their intercession, delay or even prevent the punishments of the world. Because of His friendship with them and because of their prayers, the Lord listens to their petitions and gives people a new opportunity for conversion.

We see, then, that God fully involves man in His plan.

He is not His slave who simply carries out orders without knowing what it is all about... God takes the whole person seriously and does not go over his head. This is not the way to act in friendship!

God wants the free consent of the person for His plans of love; He wants hearts to be in harmony... Then, living in friendship with God, one can present to Him the great intentions that one has in the heart; one can even ask Him for a time of grace for oneself and for others.

It can happen, for example, that as the hour of death approaches, we feel that there is still something to be done, that there is still something to be completed in our own life, that the house is not sufficiently organised... Perhaps the Lord will even grant an extension until the house is ready. It may be so, but it may also be otherwise... In any

case, if we trust the Lord completely, we will know that even an unfinished work will find refuge in His mercy and He will bring it to completion.

And even if death is not yet at our doorstep, we can always ask our heavenly Father to give us the grace to make up for what we have lost and the time to do so.

Today's reading invites us to enter into an even more trusting relationship with God, and we can be sure that this is what He wants.