

13. August 2024

The Word of God

Ezek 2:8–3:4

But you, son of man, hear what I say to you; be not rebellious like that rebellious house; open your mouth, and eat what I give you.” And when I looked, behold, a hand was stretched out to me, and lo, a written scroll was in it; and he spread it before me; and it had writing on the front and on the back, and there were written on it words of lamentation and mourning and woe. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat what is offered to you; eat this scroll, and go, speak to the house of Israel.” So I opened my mouth, and he gave me the scroll to eat. And he said to me, “Son of man, eat this scroll that I give you and fill your stomach with it.” Then I ate it; and it was in my mouth as sweet as honey. And he said to me, “Son of man, go, get you to the house of Israel, and speak with my words to them”.

“House of rebellion”... What an expressive term to describe the difficulties God has with His people! Stubborn, rebellious, the eyes of their spirit closed, their ears deaf, following the evil desires of their heart... These are just a few of the expressions we know from Scripture.

We know what happened when the Lord first came to offer salvation to the children of Israel: All the obstacles mentioned above prevented the chosen people from accepting the message of true peace with God and humanity. When we hear such words, we must examine ourselves and ask ourselves if there are such obstacles in our own hearts. If so, we must persistently present them to God in prayer so that they can be overcome.

Instead of following our evil inclinations and rebelliously closing ourselves to grace, or at least hindering it, we should accept the Word of God as it was addressed to the prophet.

In the Book of Revelation we find again the image of the scroll to be eaten (Rev 10:8-10). This comparison shows us that the internalisation of the Word of God is a prerequisite for the proper proclamation of the Lord's instructions.

Here, then, is an aspect that we must put into practice: daily reading of the Bible is indispensable both for deepening our relationship with God and for authentic evangelisation.

The Desert Fathers, men who withdrew into the desert to dedicate themselves to a life of prayer, speak of "chewing" on the Word of God, as certain animals do with their food. This is very close to the meaning of today's reading, which makes it clear that the prophet must be imbued with the Word of God. It is not enough to hear it once and then forget it! The Word of God must bear fruit in us; it must enlighten and strengthen us. That is why it must be assimilated and heard again and again.

There are various ways in which the Word can take root in us.

As well as reading the Bible - if possible for 15 to 30 minutes a day - we can, for example, try to supplement our personal reading with good commentaries on the Scriptures. We have, for example, the Fathers of the Church who interpreted the Word of God authentically. It will always be enriching to read their explanations!

Another way of interiorising the Word of God is through meditation. Some people who have a vivid imagination can imagine biblical scenes. For example, they can think of Jesus on the road with His disciples and then imagine themselves in the group that followed Him, listening to the Lord and even asking Him questions...

Memorising certain passages of Scripture will also help to deepen the Word of God. It would be useful, for example, to know certain Psalms or the Beatitudes by heart... This aspect could also be important for another reason. We do not know whether, in these times of growing anti-Christian confusion, we may suffer concrete persecutions. In any case, we must reckon with them. Therefore, in the face of these threats, it is good to collect and keep in our memory a treasure of God's words.

Another way of interiorising the Word of God is to repeat in our minds and hearts over and over again a particular phrase from Scripture. For example, we could take a phrase from the daily reading and meditate on it in our hearts. This can also be done over a longer period of time. Certain words of the Lord can become a motto for our spiritual life. For me personally, the words of Jesus were very important: *"Let him who is without*

sin among you be the first to throw a stone at her" (John 8:7). Or another: "Fear not, for I have redeemed you; I have called you by name, you are mine" (Is 43:1). Or this one: "Look at the birds of the air: they neither sow nor reap nor gather into barns, and yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are you not of more value than they?" (Mt 6:26)

In this way, the spiritual reality of these sentences penetrates us and bears fruit in us. It is also good to discuss the Word of God in prayer groups, to listen to or read good sermons, etc. In short, there are many ways to be nourished by the Word of God.

I insist: the essential thing is that it penetrates us, as today's reading suggests. For how can people believe if they do not hear the Word of God (cf. Rom 10:14)? It is not enough to know the words of the Bible well; we must put them in our hearts, as the Virgin Mary did (cf. Lk 2:51); our thoughts must be directed to the Word of God, and from it we must receive the right indications. Then the Word of God can shine in us and remain there as a light.