

14. August 2024

The life of the righteous

Wis 3:1-9

A reading from the memorial of St. Maximilian Kolbe

*The souls of the righteous are in the hand of God,
and no torment will ever touch them.*

*In the eyes of the foolish they seemed to have died,
and their departure was thought to be an affliction,
and their going from us to be their destruction;
but they are at peace.*

*For though in the sight of men they were punished,
their hope is full of immortality.*

*Having been disciplined a little, they will receive great good,
because God tested them and found them worthy of himself;
like gold in the furnace he tried them,
and like a sacrificial burnt offering he accepted them.*

*In the time of their visitation they will shine forth,
and will run like sparks through the stubble.*

*They will govern nations and rule over peoples,
and the Lord will reign over them for ever.*

*Those who trust in him will understand truth,
and the faithful will abide with him in love,
because grace and mercy are upon his elect,
and he watches over his holy ones.*

How wise it is to raise our eyes to eternity, knowing that our lives pass before the eyes of God and that only in Him do we find the just judge! It is easy for people to judge others, often failing to understand the motives that move people of faith or others.

A person whose whole life is focused on God and eternity, and who does not indulge in the joys and pleasures of this world, is often incomprehensible to those who seek earthly success, human honour and the passing things of the world. They may even condemn

those who do not live as they do and do not share the same values. So they have no eyes to see what those people, whom they even despise, really are like in the eyes of God.

But the truth will not remain hidden. At the latest in eternity everything will be revealed without the slightest deception and the eyes of the foolish, who thought they could judge everything according to their own philosophy of life, will be opened and they will see reality from God's perspective. Perhaps it will be the very people they despised who will be justified by God and whose lives will be found worthy in His sight, while they themselves will not be able to stand before Him because they have not used the talents the Lord gave them for good.

But we need not focus our attention on them, although Christian charity certainly urges us to pray for them, that they may wake up and not have to appear unrepentant before the judgement seat of God.

Instead, our gaze must be fixed on God, and our concern must be to consciously fulfil the task He has given us. A life in the grace of God - that is, the life of the righteous - shines like the sun, whether others perceive it or not. It shines before God and His own and is a great comfort to our heavenly Father.

Already here, during their pilgrimage through this world, the righteous are in God's hands, and all that they experience and suffer serves to purify them in the "crucible of His love", so that they may be accepted as a fully valid offering in eternity. In the time after Christ's coming, we would say that our sacrifice is united to Christ's perfect sacrifice on the Cross, and our Father receives it with joy.

If here on earth our life unfolds its deepest meaning when we live in God's grace, in eternity it will be revealed in all its splendour. Then we will be able to contemplate God, we will see our life with His eyes and we will receive from His hand the just reward. When we have completed our lives in the grace of God, surrendering and serving our King, He will be our King for all eternity. Never again will we experience the slightest temptation to turn away from Him.

Our Father delights to shower us with His love while we are on earth. If we open our hearts wide and trust Him, we will live in the Truth and know it ever more deeply. If our love for Him has been kindled and nourished day by day with all the supernatural

gifts that God offers us on the way of following His Son, then we will be able to remain faithful to Him to the end. His grace and mercy will always be with us, and even when we succumb to our weaknesses, the Father's hand will lift us up and encourage us to continue on our way.

The saint commemorated today in the new liturgical calendar, St Maximilian Maria Kolbe, is one of those in whom God's grace was manifested in abundance. The spirit of fortitude moved him to offer his life in the Auschwitz concentration camp in the place of a father condemned to death. With what joy the Heavenly Father must have received him into His eternal kingdom and how He must have rewarded him! A life in the service of the Lord and a death that glorified God... What a grace!