

18. August 2024

Look carefully then how you walk

Eph 5:15-20

Look carefully then how you walk, not as unwise men but as wise, making the most of the time, because the days are evil. Therefore do not be foolish, but understand what the will of the Lord is. And do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another in psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and making melody to the Lord with all your heart, always and for everything giving thanks in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father.

Blessed is the one who has a teacher as good as St Paul, who never tires of exhorting his communities to continue on the right path, and who gives them valuable advice! Blessed is the one who listens to his words and tries to put into practice all the guidelines he gives us for the way!

Today we have listened to his exhortation to "look carefully at how we walk". Surely this warning is not addressed only to those who are in danger of indulging in unrestrained alcohol consumption; but surely the Apostle of the Gentiles wants us to extend this vigilance to all aspects of our lives.

When we are drunken by alcohol or other substances, our spirit is dissipated and we lose at least some control over ourselves. St Paul, on the other hand, advises us: "*do not get drunk with wine, for that is debauchery; but be filled with the Spirit*". The Spirit lifts us above ourselves and fills us with true joy. The Spirit of God does not confuse, but 'makes drunk with love'. The drunkenness of the Spirit can never be compared to the drunkenness of wine, as St Paul shows us in today's reading. St Peter also makes this clear in his discourse on Pentecost (cf. Acts 2:14-36). The Holy Spirit does not cause confusion, but enables us to understand things in the light of God. We can say that He sharpens our ability to understand by His light and invites us to praise God with psalms, hymns and songs.

So let us be attentive to how we live. In fact, this care is important in all areas of our lives: in our work, in the management of the goods entrusted to us, even more so in our

dealings with others, and of course in our spiritual life. If we have not learned this care in our family upbringing, we still have time to do so by educating ourselves.

Saint Paul speaks of living as wise men. Surely he is referring to what we call 'Christian prudence', whose yardstick is this criterion: What is right for the kingdom of God, what helps me to grow in love, and what hinders or distracts me? If we apply this prudence, our lives will be more governed by the Spirit of God and we will have a parameter that will become our measure. Of course, this should not become an inner tension or make us scrupulous. Rather, it is a way of leading our lives with wisdom and making them fruitful.

There is another indication from St Paul, which is very simple, but at the same time very important: *'make the most of the time, because the days are evil'*. This reminds us of the other words of Psalm 90: *"Teach us to number our days that we may get a heart of wisdom"* (v. 12).

These words exhort us to be vigilant and to be fully awake. This world is not our final dwelling place and we must use every day of our lives to serve the kingdom of God and prepare for eternity. It is also important that, while we are aware of the reality of evil, we do not become too preoccupied with it or harbor all kinds of fears within ourselves. Our gaze must be fixed on God! I insist once again: Evil - or the Evil One - is not omnipotent. We must always keep this in mind and remind ourselves of it when it seems to be gaining power. Let us not give him influence over us through our fears and anxieties. Rather, let us bring everything before the Lord. Let us make time for God! He has everything in His hands: let us trust Him! It is precisely the awareness that "the days are evil", as St Paul says, that can stimulate us to draw even closer to the Lord and to serve Him and others.

St Paul reminds us to praise the Lord with all our heart and to thank Him always and for everything. On the one hand, this is the right thing to do, and on the other, it will help us to deepen our trust in God and our love for Him. Gratitude makes us aware of God's goodness and wisdom, engraves it more deeply in our hearts, and thus awakens a stronger trust. With this trust and spiritual vigilance we can go through life, even when the days are bad.