

13. September 2024

The threshold of the house of my God

Sal 83:3,4,5-6^a,8a,11

*How lovely your dwelling,
O Lord of hosts!*

*My soul yearns and pines
for the courts of the Lord.
My heart and flesh cry out
for the living God.*

*As the sparrow finds a home
and the swallow a nest to settle her young,
My home is by your altars,
Lord of hosts, my king and my God!*

*Blessed are those who dwell in your house!
They never cease to praise you.
Blessed the man who finds refuge in you,
in their hearts are pilgrim roads.*

*Better one day in your courts
than a thousand elsewhere.
Better the threshold of the house of my God
than a home in the tents of the wicked.*

A great love has awakened in the psalmist. His soul suffers an affliction of love when it cannot be fully united to God. It is consumed in its longing, because everything in it is focused on the Lord. At the same time, the soul exults for God, for the One who has gone out to meet her and conquered her with His love.

To experience this love is an endless delight and joy. No one but God is able to fill the soul and to lead everything in it to perfection. Because of this love everything can be

left behind. All creatures, however beautiful and good they may be, are only witnesses, witnesses of the One who is love itself (cf. 1 Jn 4:16). Saint Augustine describes his search for God as follows:

“I asked the heavens, the sun and moon and stars: Nor, say they, are we the God whom thou seekest. And I replied unto all these, which stand so round about these doors of my flesh: Answer me concerning my God, since that you are not He, answer me something of Him. And they cried out with a loud voice: He made us” (St. Augustine, *The Confessions*, 10,6).

The soul awakened by love wants to be with the beloved at all times. It cannot even imagine living a single day apart from it. It prefers to occupy the last place in the Temple of God rather than to live with the wicked. Every moment with God is worth infinitely more to her than a thousand years away from Him: *"Better one day in your courts than a thousand elsewhere"*.

This is the language of love, which wants to overcome every obstacle to be with the beloved.

How true these words are also for us Christians!

Is it not incomparably better to occupy the last place in the Lord's Kingdom and greet Him, even from a distance, than to be intoxicated by the frenzy of this world? Is it not better to render the humblest service at the gate of heaven than to be someone recognised in this ungodly world and end up in the place where there will be "weeping and gnashing of teeth" (e.g. Mt 25:30)?

We may not perceive in our hearts a joy like that of the psalmist, and words of such burning and inflamed love may not come from our lips as those he declares in his psalm. However, this should not discourage us. We can ask the Lord to awaken in us a love so great that we put nothing before God and really burn for Him, so that this fire permeates our whole life.

Even if we do not feel so inflamed by this love, we can show it to the Lord in various ways. First and foremost, we faithfully keep His commandments: *"Whoever holds to my commandments and keeps them is the one who loves me"*, Jesus tells us (Jn 14:21).

We also show our love for Him in the faithful and sacrificial fulfilment of our duties of state, in our willingness to serve our neighbour and in our faithfulness and perseverance: *"Because you have kept my commandment to persevere, I will keep you safe in the time of trial which is coming for the whole world, to put the people of the world to the test"* (Rev 3:10).

Even if we feel cold and distant inside, we must not fall into despair, believing that we are incapable of love. Let us offer our cold hearts to the Lord and tell our Father that we really want to love Him and live as His children. Then God will notice our intention and will see even our efforts to truly love Him as acts of love.