

3. October 2024

The victory of love

Job 19:21-27

*Job said: Have pity on me, have pity on me, O you my friends,
for the hand of God has touched me!
Why do you, like God, pursue me?
Why are you not satisfied with my flesh?
“Oh that my words were written!
Oh that they were inscribed in a book!
Oh that with an iron pen and lead
they were graven in the rock for ever!
For I know that my Redeemer lives,
and at last he will stand upon the earth;
and after my skin has been thus destroyed,
then from my flesh I shall see God,
whom I shall see on my side,
and my eyes shall behold, and not another.”*

All the terrible sufferings that Job had to endure, including the words of his own friends, which he perceived as persecution against him, could not diminish his longing to meet God, nor could they diminish his faith in the Saviour. Although he experienced as persecution what God had allowed, his heart remained focused on Him and he came out of all his suffering with an even greater love.

If we look at Job's situation from the perspective of the spiritual path, we could say that he experienced certain elements of those two 'nights' spoken of in classical mystical theology: the 'night of the senses' and the 'night of the spirit'.

When God wants to draw a soul closer to Himself and grants it the grace of a deeper union with Him already in this life, certain purifications take place which are intended to purify and increase its love.

In order to avoid misunderstandings and not to give the Devil the opportunity to frighten souls, it should be clarified that not everyone is expected to undergo a process

of the same magnitude as that of Job, just as not everyone is called to the bloody martyrdom of Saint John of Brebeuf. But what counts for everyone are the essential elements of these processes of purification, which God in His wisdom will carry out according to the way He leads each individual soul. And if we do not do this in this life, we will have to go through the purification after death.

The so-called 'night of the senses' consists in purifying man from his natural inclination to the things of this world, to the pleasures of the senses, to his attachment to the transitory.... Let us recall that at the beginning of the story, Satan had told God that Job only praised Him because He had filled him with so many good things and blessed his life (cf. Jn 1:9-11).

In view of this, God allowed Job to be stripped of all his wealth (v.12). These purifications continued and later affected his physical health (2:7).

The purpose of purification is to make our love for God ever purer. Any disordered attachment - whatever it may be - diminishes our response to God. For example, if I had as many material possessions as Job, my love for God would probably be affected in two ways:

1. I might love the goods themselves too much.
2. My love for God might be too influenced by the fact that He has blessed me with so many goods.

In the face of these two dangers to my ability to love, purification is necessary, for the goal is that we learn to love God simply for His sake. In this way, the loss of earthly goods is an opportunity for purification and testing, as in the case of Job; to focus on God in this situation, to discover more deeply that He is the true treasure, and thus to grow in love. In this way, our love will become more disinterested, focusing not so much on the goods that God gives, but on the Giver of these goods: that is, God Himself.

The "night of the spirit", on the other hand, includes the purification of the intellect when it is too attached to its natural speculations and reflections and is not sufficiently illuminated by the supernatural light of God. Thus, purification is also necessary in the intellectual realm, because there are also great attachments to one's own thoughts and ideas, and one is in danger of loving and believing them more than God Himself.

Job had to refute the arguments of his friends, and as these conversations and purifications went on, the expression of his surrender to God became purer and purer, as we can see at the end of today's reading.

In Job's case, there is an additional element of purification: it turns out that his closest friends and family do not understand him and almost become his opponents.

Here, too, he is purified so that his love is focused first and foremost on God.

Although it may frighten us to see how Job's purification takes place, we must look at the goal from God's perspective: Job overcomes all trials and love triumphs. This is always God's intention, even if sometimes, in the dark nights, we cannot see it. That is why we need trust. With it we will be able to glorify the Lord, especially when we have to go through times of tribulation.