

23. October 2024

## The mystery of God has been revealed

Eph 3:2-12

*Assuming that you have heard of the stewardship of God's grace that was given to me for you, how the mystery was made known to me by revelation, as I have written briefly. When you read this you can perceive my insight into the mystery of Christ, which was not made known to the sons of men in other generations as it has now been revealed to his holy apostles and prophets by the Spirit; that is, how the Gentiles are fellow heirs, members of the same body, and partakers of the promise in Christ Jesus through the gospel. Of this gospel I was made a minister according to the gift of God's grace which was given me by the working of his power. To me, though I am the very least of all the saints, this grace was given, to preach to the Gentiles the unsearchable riches of Christ, and to make all men see what is the plan of the mystery hidden for ages in[a] God who created all things; that through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places. This was according to the eternal purpose which he has realized in Christ Jesus our Lord, in whom we have boldness and confidence of access through our faith in him.*

The mystery hidden in God for centuries has been revealed - today's reading assures us. The Gospel brings us this light, and the Apostle Paul was called in a special way to proclaim to the Gentiles this mystery which has now become reality.

In the times of the Old Covenant, God had established a strict separation between the people of Israel and the Gentiles, so that His chosen people would not be defiled by pagan idols or confused, perhaps falling into a "false brotherhood". In the New Covenant, however, the Gentiles are called by the Gospel to be co-heirs and part of the same body, the Church, made visible by the descent of the Holy Spirit at Pentecost.

It is important to realise that this knowledge of God's ways is not the result of human reflection, but has been revealed to us. That is to say, God Himself has communicated it and entrusted it in a special way to St Paul, "the least of all saints", as he describes himself. As we all know from Scripture, thanks to a vision of Christ, Paul was

transformed from a fierce persecutor of Christians into a tireless herald of the Gospel (cf. Acts 9:1-8). His conversion is so significant that the Church rightly established a liturgical feast to celebrate it, for his service was invaluable for the proclamation of the Gospel and the building up of the nascent Church.

A revelation is on a different level from myths, human knowledge and wisdom, legends and dreams of all kinds; it is on a different level from the 'seeds of the word' found in other religions and from a natural knowledge of God. Revelation is the self-manifestation of God, and for those who wish to serve Him it becomes a "sacred duty", an undeniable truth from which they cannot and will not shrink.

This is why Saint Paul, in another of his letters, speaks of evangelisation as a "duty" (cf. 1 Cor 9:16). It is a duty, a responsibility stemming from the knowledge of God, a commitment to serve love and truth, a "sacred duty", so to speak, and therefore also an immense grace. The Apostle is aware of this!

Thanks to the proclamation of the Gospel, this mystery of God, which has been revealed and has led to the conversion of those who believe and confess, is now entrusted to all believers. They too have this "sacred duty" to proclaim and to witness by a life of conversion. In this way they respond to the first commandment, to love God above all things, and to the commandment to love their neighbour, by sharing with them the most important thing: the message of Christ. This is even greater than the corporal works of mercy, since it spans time and eternity.

It is essential to maintain the primacy of evangelisation and not to emphasise the corporal works of mercy to the point of neglecting what is most important, thus depriving man of the most important dimension of his life, which is the revelation of God through the Gospel.

In this context, the vigilance to which today's Gospel exhorts us can also be related to evangelisation: "*if the householder had known at what hour the thief was coming, he would not have left his house to be broken into*" (Lk 12:39). This gap would be opened, for example, if we were to place God's revelation on the same level as the religions of other peoples, giving them the same value as our own holy faith. If this happens, the thief has already entered the house, weakening the uniqueness of divine revelation and distracting us from the essential in many ways.

The last words of today's Gospel are these: *“Every one to whom much is given, of him will much be required; and of him to whom men commit much they will demand the more”* (Lk 12:48).

The Church has been entrusted with the revelation of God, to guard it and to serve it. This, then, is the task of each one of the faithful, according to the measure given to them. It is true humility to submit to this task that the Lord has given us and to serve it. Then we will not proclaim our own ideas, illusions, conceptions and dreams, but what God has planned for the salvation of mankind, so that, as Saint Paul says, *“through the church the manifold wisdom of God might now be made known to the principalities and powers in the heavenly places”*.