

7. November 2024

## The sublimity of the knowledge of Christ

Phil 3:3-8

*We are the true people of the circumcision since we worship by the Spirit of God and make Christ Jesus our only boast, not relying on physical qualifications, although, I myself could rely on these too. If anyone does claim to rely on them, my claim is better. Circumcised on the eighth day of my life, I was born of the race of Israel, of the tribe of Benjamin, a Hebrew born of Hebrew parents. In the matter of the Law, I was a Pharisee; as for religious fervour, I was a persecutor of the Church; as for the uprightness embodied in the Law, I was faultless. But what were once my assets I now through Christ Jesus count as losses. Yes, I will go further: because of the supreme advantage of knowing Christ Jesus my Lord, I count everything else as loss. For him I have accepted the loss of all other things, and look on them all as filth if only I can gain Christ.*

Today's text alludes to a problem that can become a great obstacle in the following of Christ: It is placing confidence in the special circumstances, talents or privileges that we may have received in our life. These easily give rise to false self-esteem and foster our vanities.

Some time ago I had quoted a Jesuit priest, Father Lallement, in meditations. As a spiritual master, he was very sad to see that a spirit was creeping into his Order that valued academic training and other natural qualities more than growth in the Spirit of Christ. In fact, this tendency is fatal, because in reality the unfolding of the supernatural life in us is of far greater importance than that of the natural gifts, however good and profitable the latter may be.

This is precisely what St. Paul makes us understand very clearly in today's reading. He, who possessed significant privileges, was well aware of how wrong it is to place confidence in them or to glory in them... In this way, he exhorts us never to lose sight of what is essential and to understand our value as persons based on the love that God has for us. What good is a brilliant intellect if it is not subordinated to the Spirit of God and placed at His service? What good are family privileges (such as growing up in a

Catholic family) and even the reception of the sacraments, if all this is not made fruitful for the Kingdom of God? We could continue with a long list of examples...

But St. Paul goes even a step further... Trusting and glorying in certain privileges not only limits our spiritual advancement; it can become such an obstacle that the Apostle prefers to consider them as a loss and regard them as garbage.

In speaking thus, he means that these privileges, when we do not handle them well, can seduce us to build upon them our self-esteem, which can become a great obstacle to the supernatural life; so Paul decides to distance himself completely from all these privileges "according to the flesh".

In Christ alone are we to glory (cf. 2 Cor. 10:17)! To every privilege or talent that He has granted us, we must put it in its rightful place. A lucid intellect, good looks, artistic talent or any other aptitude are good gifts on a natural level. But they become burdens or "garbage" when they make us proud and vain, and do not simply occupy in humility their rightful place in the hierarchy of values.

To attain humility is usually a long process and implies a long formation... Special privileges -whatever they may be- must be consciously subordinated and not given a special value in relation to the knowledge of the Lord. It is good to let them act in the background before highlighting them, whether in our own interior or before others... All this will help us to grow in humility! A person as gifted as St. Paul was well aware of this, and we would do well to heed his advice.

NOTE: Since today is the 7th day of the month, which we always dedicate in a special way to our Heavenly Father, we want to invite you to listen to the "3 minutes for Abba", which is a small impulse that we publish daily in order to deepen the relationship of trust with God the Father. You can find them in the following links:

-Telegram: <https://t.me/threeminutesforAbba>

-Webpage: <http://en.elijamission.net/category/3-minutes-for-god-the-father/>