

20. November 2024

## Holy reverence

Rev 4:1-11

*Then, in my vision, I saw a door open in heaven and heard the same voice speaking to me, the voice like a trumpet, saying, 'Come up here: I will show you what is to take place in the future.' With that, I fell into ecstasy and I saw a throne standing in heaven, and the One who was sitting on the throne, and the One sitting there looked like a diamond and a ruby. There was a rainbow encircling the throne, and this looked like an emerald. Round the throne in a circle were twenty-four thrones, and on them twenty-four elders sitting, dressed in white robes with golden crowns on their heads. Flashes of lightning were coming from the throne, and the sound of peals of thunder, and in front of the throne there were seven flaming lamps burning, the seven Spirits of God. In front of the throne was a sea as transparent as crystal. In the middle of the throne and around it, were four living creatures all studded with eyes, in front and behind. The first living creature was like a lion, the second like a bull, the third living creature had a human face, and the fourth living creature was like a flying eagle. Each of the four living creatures had six wings and was studded with eyes all the way round as well as inside; and day and night they never stopped singing: Holy, Holy, Holy is the Lord God, the Almighty; who was, and is and is to come.' Every time the living creatures glorified and honoured and gave thanks to the One sitting on the throne, who lives for ever and ever, the twenty-four elders prostrated themselves before him to worship the One who lives for ever and ever, and threw down their crowns in front of the throne, saying: You are worthy, our Lord and God, to receive glory and honour and power, for you made the whole universe; by your will, when it did not exist, it was created.*

The holy angels and the Elders who adore the Majesty of God... How important it is that we do not lose this dimension! Precisely because we are children of God and have been called to live in the most intimate relationship with God, our Father, we cannot neglect reverent love, with all its respective gestures. Not that God is in need of it! But these gestures correspond to the truth and lead the creatures to the right attitude before their Creator, so that all His creatures honor Him and are enveloped by His glory. The one who does need the gestures of adoration is man! When he loses them, he deprives

himself of that beauty that lies in the act of adoration; that beauty that we can find in the angels and Elders, according to the description in today's reading.

When I am in Jerusalem, I have the grace to pray daily before the Cross of the Lord, in the very place where the King, raised above the earth, gave His life for us to fulfill the Will of the Father. Day after day many people arrive, and one can perceive the different attitudes among them. Some seem to not be very conscious of the significance of that place; others, on the other hand, show gestures of great emotion and reverence... Among the Christians of the East, it is common to prostrate themselves on their faces before God and give profound signs of reverence. In no way do they allow themselves to be disturbed by the presence of other people. This is seen especially among Ethiopian Christians. Other people remain kneeling for a long time before the Cross... Even if they do not see the Throne of God directly - as is the case with the angels and the Elders - they express in faith all their reverence before their Lord. How much dignity is manifested in these faithful, whose gestures invite us to give glory to God, according to each one's expression!

Silence before the Lord is also part of adoration. How magnificent is a liturgy celebrated with dignity! And yet, how much it is trivialized when noise and chatter prevent the reception of its holy splendor; when reverence and holy silence are lost in the liturgy; when expressions of reverence give way to worldly attitudes!

Authentic reverence, which has nothing to do with fear, false respect or servile submission, forms us, not only in our relationship with God, but also in our relationships with other people and with the whole of Creation. Reverence avoids falling into triviality, both in words and in gestures. It teaches us to see people from God's perspective, taking care not to belittle them. The awareness grows more and more as each person is formed to the image of God (cf. Gen 1:27) and, as His child, is called to witness to the Father's love in this world. Even if we fail in our goal and suffer a deformation of our being as a result of sin, we are still called to live in that dignity which our Heavenly Father has bestowed upon us. The way of conversion is open to us, so that even the lost can return and regain the dignity that God has given them.

How far we often are from this reverent attitude! We have to learn it from the Lord. It is difficult to bear the fact that often justified criticism is accompanied by hurtful remarks, which do not respect the dignity of the other person. Even if it is an

indignation with just reason, we must learn to restrain ourselves and to distinguish between the objective issue and the person involved.

Authentic reverence before God will help us to develop this attitude in our relationship with other people as well. We must watch over our heart and guard our tongue. From the Virgin Mary we can learn true love and reverence before God and humankind. Our divine Friend, the Holy Spirit, will certainly always be ready to welcome us in His school to grow in holy reverence, which enriches our life.