

18. March 2025

MEDITATIONS FOR LENT

“The influence of darkness”

In the sense of 'discretio' it is inescapable to face the current crisis in the Church, for how else would we draw the right conclusions to face it as disciples of the Lord? If we ignore it, we will continue to behave as if nothing has changed, and we will end up becoming carriers of modernist errors ourselves. If we even agree with such errors, then, without realising it, we are working on the side of those who want to destroy the Church or transform it into a humanitarian institution, as the philosopher Dietrich von Hildebrand so aptly described it. If we remain silent when we see errors, we should take to heart the words of Pope Felix III: "Not to oppose error is to approve it; and not to defend truth is to suppress it".

On the other hand, the realisation that the ecclesiastical hierarchy has embarked on a wrong course should not shake us or confuse us to the point of leading us to resignation or to leave the Church and join another denomination. That would be the wrong conclusion. The Catholic Church remains the Church founded by Christ, even when attacked from within and without.

In this way, the present crisis becomes a call for everyone to take responsibility for the holy faith that was given to us, which becomes even more urgent in times of tribulation. Whoever recognises the 'devastation of the vineyard' must ask the Lord of the Church to teach them how to counteract it. We are therefore called to a battle in defence of the holiness of the Church, which must be fought with spiritual weapons. While many Catholics are not yet aware of how existential the current crisis is, some are waking up from the 'poisoned nightmare', as the late Cardinal Pell described the current ecclesiastical situation. And the sooner they wake up the better, lest the subtle poison of false doctrine and practice continue to darken their souls.

The guidelines are given! All lethargy, but also all unhealthy excess of zeal, must be cast off. With sobriety and spiritual determination, we must be aware of our responsibility to enter into this spiritual battle. The present state of the ecclesiastical hierarchy, which we recognise thanks to "discretion", requires an adequate response on our part. We do

not question the ministries established by God to govern the Church, but the manner in which they are exercised to the confusion of the faithful. If these ministries have fallen under the influence of a 'another spirit' than the Spirit of the Lord, they lose their spiritual authority and cannot demand religious obedience from the faithful.

Without losing respect for the ministry as such, and without beginning to belittle the person exercising it, a clear distance must be taken: not cooperation with error, but a firm rejection of it, as St Thomas Aquinas clearly teaches: "It must be observed, however, that if the faith were endangered, a subject ought to rebuke his prelate even publicly."

Now it is necessary to go a step further in discernment, so that the full dimension of the situation and thus of the struggle to be waged becomes clear. It is not enough to stop at the human level of the problem. When false doctrines infiltrate the Church's proclamation, when her enemies gain influence in her, when she becomes increasingly anthropocentric, when moral aberrations occur, when confusion rather than clarity and guidance spreads among the faithful, then "discretion" (as discernment of spirits) raises the simple question: who is behind all this?

The answer is clear: it is the demonic powers, namely Lucifer, who have gained great influence over the Church. Let us recall what we heard in the Gospel of John: Jesus had no qualms about telling the stubborn religious authorities that their father was the devil (Jn 8:44). And in another Gospel passage, He made it clear that it was Satan who was behind Peter's humanly understandable attempt to dissuade Him from going up to Jerusalem (Mt 16:23).

The present confusion in the Church, which reaches to the very top and affects even its leaders, is an essential part of the demonic plan to stifle or falsify the testimony of Jesus to be proclaimed through the mouth of His Church. This must be clearly identified in order to take appropriate action in the spiritual battle. The disciple must be aware of the real enemies he faces.

As St Paul says, "*we are not contending against flesh and blood, but against the principalities, against the powers, (...) and against the spiritual hosts*" (Eph 6:12).

This point of view will help us not to get bogged down in the human sphere of debate, but to take up the weapons suggested to us by the Apostle to the Gentiles. Therefore, the virtue of discretion urges us to consciously engage in spiritual combat, which is an honour for us and at the same time deepens our spiritual life. And this deepening is necessary in order to be able to stand in this battle with God's grace.