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LETTER TO THE ROMANS

“The Spirit bears witness that we are children of God”

Rom 8:14-17

For all who are led by the Spirit of God are sons of God. For you did not receive the spirit of slavery to fall back into fear, but you have received the spirit of sonship. When we cry, “Abba! Father!” it is the Spirit himself bearing witness with our spirit that we are children of God, and if children, then heirs, heirs of God and fellow heirs with Christ, provided we suffer with him in order that we may also be glorified with him.

St. Paul reminds the Christians of Rome of the great grace that is at work in them through faith. They are children of God, and it is the Spirit Himself who bears witness to this, He who has become their guide. He assures them of their divine filiation and makes them recognise that they have a most loving Father.

Although we are certainly well acquainted with this truth, we do not always live with the awareness that we are beloved children of our Heavenly Father. A false fear—not to be confused with the gift of fear of God—often clouds our relationship with our Father, and the devil uses it to disturb or even destroy our trust in God. Moreover, it is a great injustice to God, because it prevents us from recognising the love He has shown us, and distorts His true image to the point of making it unrecognisable.

The Holy Spirit, on the other hand, transmits to us the true image of God and is always ready to awaken and increase in us the awareness of His love, so that it becomes our nourishment and our joy, and gives us the security we need in this world.

St. Paul then refers to the suffering we endure as heirs of God and co-heirs with Christ:

“I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory that is to be revealed to us. For the creation waits with eager longing for the revealing of the sons of God; for the creation was subjected to futility, not of its own will but by the will of

him who subjected it in hope; because the creation itself will be set free from its bondage to decay and obtain the glorious liberty of the children of God. We know that the whole creation has been groaning in travail together until now; and not only the creation, but we ourselves, who have the first fruits of the Spirit, groan inwardly as we wait for adoption as sons, the redemption of our bodies.” (Rom 8:18-23).

Paul does not hide from us that in following the Lord, suffering awaits us. Rather, he invites us to endure it with a view to the glory that awaits us in eternity. This indication is very useful in practice, since it teaches us not to see this life only from an earthly perspective, but to always lift our gaze to God. If we anchor our hope in God and in eternal life, our earthly sufferings will be put into perspective. Furthermore, we have the motivation that, if we endure them for the sake of the Lord, all our sufferings will be credited to us by God as merit and will give us the opportunity to “*complete what is lacking] in Christ’s afflictions for the sake of his body, that is, the church,*” (Col 1:24).

Even irrational creation is included in this suffering, awaiting the manifestation of the children of God, that is, those who walk their path according to God's will and thus show themselves to be His true children. The Allioli-Arndt Bible comments on this passage as follows: ‘Creatures will be raised to that freedom which will bring with it the state of transfiguration which the children of God will experience, because then every creature will serve its purpose of glorifying God, and in its original perfection will reveal more clearly the infinite power, wisdom, goodness and other attributes of God, and will no longer be abused by men (for example, for idolatry).’

‘Likewise the Spirit helps us in our weakness; for we do not know how to pray as we ought, but the Spirit himself intercedes for us with sighs too deep for words. And he who searches the hearts of men knows what is the mind of the Spirit, because] the Spirit intercedes for the saints according to the will of God.’ (Rom 8:26-27).

In all respects, believers can count on the inestimable assistance of the Holy Spirit. He Himself inspires us what to ask for and prays in our hearts. In this context, I would like to suggest to my listeners the ‘prayer of the heart,’ on which I have given a lecture (<https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=K8NmWQ1W0Ks&t=1s>). Once we have become

accustomed to this prayer through regular practice, it may happen that the Spirit Himself prays in us and that we thus easily enter into fruitful interior prayer. This will help us to better understand the concluding words of the eighth chapter of the Letter to the Romans, which strengthen us in our trust in the Lord:

“I am sure that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor things present, nor things to come, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus our Lord.” (vv. 38-39).

Meditation on the day's Gospel: <https://en.elijamission.net/building-the-house-on-trust-in-god/>