

21. September 2022

Feast of St. Matthew, apostle and evangelist
Patience

Eph 4:1-7,11-13

I, the prisoner in the Lord, urge you therefore to lead a life worthy of the vocation to which you were called. With all humility and gentleness, and with patience, support each other in love. Take every care to preserve the unity of the Spirit by the peace that binds you together. There is one Body, one Spirit, just as one hope is the goal of your calling by God. There is one Lord, one faith, one baptism, and one God and Father of all, over all, through all and within all. On each one of us God's favour has been bestowed in whatever way Christ allotted it. And to some, his 'gift' was that they should be apostles; to some prophets; to some, evangelists; to some, pastors and teachers; to knit God's holy people together for the work of service to build up the Body of Christ, until we all reach unity in faith and knowledge of the Son of God and form the perfect Man, fully mature with the fullness of Christ himself.

As we follow the daily readings according to the liturgical cycle, we will sometimes encounter similar texts. When this is the case, I will occasionally focus the day's meditation on a particular aspect of the biblical text, either to try to understand it better or to delve more deeply into a specific theme.

Today, having heard St. Paul exhort us to patience, we can offer some reflections on this virtue, which St. Teresa of Avila says "achieves everything".

Let us begin by looking at God himself, who possesses in full this marvelous virtue, which for us is perhaps one of the most difficult to acquire. The disciples also had to learn this lesson from Jesus, because many times one is carried away by one's own impetuosity and restlessness; one wants to reach the goal quickly and cannot wait until the right moment arrives...

If we look at God Himself, we recognize the infinite patience that He has with us, His children. Who of us has not experienced this loving waiting of God, until the moment came when we were ready to accept what He had planned for us? Let us think of His

patience in establishing His holy order in our souls; of His repeated admonitions and warnings; of His waiting until the evangelization of peoples takes place and until men are finally converted...

The disciples of the Lord wanted to bring down fire from heaven on a certain village that had not wanted to receive the proclamation of Jesus (cf. Lk 9:52-54). But he made them understand that it was the sick who needed the physician (cf. Mt 9:12).

Patience means knowing how to wait until things have matured, until they have gone through their process of growth. In the case of a person who consciously submits to God's guidance, it is a matter of waiting until the moment will have arrived, not anticipating it...

We can exercise this kind of patience, restraining everything that generates restlessness in us. In fact, we can often perceive when we lose our calm, when we become too intense and rigid inside, when our nervousness increases... Patience is not, in any way, the laziness or slowness of the phlegmatic temperament. Nor is it the absence of emotions or a kind of apathy; rather, it is a virtue in which we must train ourselves.

So how can we learn to be more patient? Certainly the best way is to start seeing things from God's perspective. This especially counts for very weighty matters, as the painful situation of the Church is at present for those people who realize this. They are anxiously waiting for Peter's boat to get back on course.

Certainly we can and should intensify our prayer, offer sacrifices, perform certain actions that are useful... But, at the same time, trusting in God's ways and in his Wisdom, we must wait to see what the Lord intends with these painful purifications. When we find out, we will praise Him for it, and it would be best to begin at once, even if we are still in the dark!

The same applies in many other fields. Let us always set our eyes on God, without ceasing to do what we are capable of, but waiting on Him. And if it seems to us that the expected moment is slow in coming, let us make an act of trust: God has everything in his hands, while our vision is limited! Let us wait on Him and not be hasty in our restlessness to act before the time.

Then, we must bring before God all our feelings of restlessness and allow them to be touched by Him. In this way the virtue of patience is formed, which does not consist of ignoring or overlooking justified worries, but of abandoning our whole being into God's hands. From this trust, calm and security will enter our life. If trust becomes our deepest strength and impulse, patience will be the shining testimony of an unconditional surrender to God, which will also invite other people to aspire to this precious treasure. Let us remember once again the phrase of St. Teresa of Avila: "Patience achieves everything."