

30. September 2022

Knowing how to wait on God

Job 38:1,12-21; 40:1-5

Then from the heart of the tempest the Lord gave Job his answer. He said: "Have you ever in your life given orders to the morning or sent the dawn to its post, to grasp the earth by its edges and shake the wicked out of it? She turns it as red as a clay seal, she tints it as though it were a dress, stealing the light from evil-doers and breaking the arm raised to strike. Have you been right down to the sources of the sea and walked about at the bottom of the Abyss? Have you been shown the gates of Death, have you seen the janitors of the Shadow dark as death? Have you an inkling of the extent of the earth? Tell me all about it if you have! Which is the way to the home of the Light, and where does darkness live? - You could then show them the way to their proper places, you could put them on the path home again! If you do know, you must have been born when they were, you must be very old by now!" Job replied to the Lord: "My words have been frivolous: what can I reply? I had better lay my hand over my mouth. I have spoken once, I shall not speak again; I have spoken twice, I have nothing more to say."

Often many words can confuse, and not infrequently obscure the light of truth. Indeed, how can this light of truth penetrate more deeply into us if our thinking and speaking is constantly filled and poured out in a river of words? It is not for nothing that Scripture exhorts us to be "*quick to listen but slow to speak*" (Jas 1:19).

But how are we to deal with our eagerness to talk at all hours and to comment on everything? It can easily turn into speaking without understanding, because, in fact, understanding comes not so much from an abundance of words as from listening to what God wants to transmit to us. We should cover our mouths more often, so that we can develop our interior persons!

Although there are situations of great suffering in which it is appropriate to unburden our inner anguish to God, to expose our complaints and needs to Him and even to allow ourselves to ask Him why, without ever accusing Him; certainly the best way to reach a greater understanding is to enter into a trusting silence. Because after a while our questions will only repeat themselves and the lack of answers could simply lead us

to reaffirm the same old positions. Often we do not know why this or that happens and we have to learn to accept it first.

In today's reading this human ignorance resonates again. The knowledge of God is so far beyond our capacity to understand that the wisest and most prudent attitude is to allow ourselves to be instructed by Him, keeping silent and listening to Him. Human reason is simply lacking: we ignore the contexts and, at best, we see as through a blurred mirror, as St. Paul so aptly expresses it (cf. 1 Cor 13:12). For this reason, we need that illumination that does not come from ourselves, but is given to us. It is precisely this enlightenment - and I am referring to that which comes from the Holy Spirit - that can be hindered by our attempt to find our solutions on our own. We begin to go round and round on the same subject, and this is neither productive nor does it give serenity to the soul.

Let us learn from the conclusion reached by Job: *"I have spoken once, I shall not speak again; I have spoken twice, I have nothing more to say"*!

God will be able to communicate with us more easily if, after having unburdened our hearts to Him, we try to pass as soon as possible to this attentive silence. We have already told Him what we had to tell Him; He knows everything and everything is exposed before Him; there is no doubt that He will have mercy on our need. We only have to learn to wait and to trust! This is an inner formation that the Holy Spirit gives us: to wait on God, with the certainty that He will respond.

What we have said here does not count only for situations of such intense suffering as Job had to endure. Growth in the spiritual life is an ever-increasing waiting for God's action and the precise moment for our cooperation. Our human efforts - however important they may be - always bring with them the stain of imperfection. That is why the Holy Spirit wants to make us more and more into people who listen and collaborate with Him while, on the other hand, attentively perceive His guidance.

Let us seek this silence, then, and learn to listen and wait. This attitude should not be adopted only when we find ourselves in special moments such as a spiritual retreat; it should become our constant interior attitude, so that we do not always externalize everything, allowing excessive chatter and talk to impede a deeper understanding. Waiting on God will lead us to an ever more contemplative attitude; that is, a receptive

attitude, which allows the Lord to work more powerfully in us. It is precisely this attitude that illumines and energizes our actions in union with God.

In tomorrow's reading, we will see how Job will finally abandon himself completely into God's hands, and this is also the goal of our own journeys.