

13. April 2024

Living as children of God

In the traditional calendar, Saint Hermenegild, Martyr, is celebrated. The following reading has been chosen for his memorial:

Wis 5:1-5

*Then the righteous man will stand with great confidence
in the presence of those who have afflicted him,
and those who make light of his labors.*

*When they see him, they will be shaken with dreadful fear,
and they will be amazed at his unexpected salvation.*

*They will speak to one another in repentance,
and in anguish of spirit they will groan, and say,*

*“This is the man whom we once held in derision
and made a byword of reproach—we fools!*

*We thought that his life was madness
and that his end was without honor.*

*Why has he been numbered among the sons of God?
And why is his lot among the saints?*

How foolish and ignorant are those who despise and mock the faithful! They have not understood the deepest mystery of life and mock at things whose greatness they do not even comprehend. It is just as St Paul says:

"The unspiritual man does not receive the gifts of the Spirit of God, for they are folly to him, and he is not able to understand them because they are spiritually discerned. The spiritual man judges all things, but is himself to be judged by no one" (1 Cor 2:14-15).

If we are aware of this, we will be able to deal better with these people, because we will see that they have a big problem that prevents them from accessing the deeper dimension of life. On an objective level, they are people in need, even if they are incapable of recognising it and refuse to acknowledge it. If there is even mockery and unhealthy sarcasm in their attitude, it is a sign that their proud heart has been opened to the influence of demons and these are darkening it more and more. In such a case,

we can only hope and pray that they will recognise their error and not close themselves off from the necessary steps towards humility.

It will certainly hurt us to be ridiculed ourselves or our holy faith, because it hurts our dignity and offends God. However, in a world increasingly marked by an anti-Christian atmosphere, we must be prepared for faith to be attacked in both the public and private spheres.

One of the most poisonous and vicious things is ridicule. Of course, it is not easy to deal with, but if we face it properly, it will bear spiritual fruit in us. It will help us to gain greater freedom from people and not to become dependent on what they think. The intensity of our hurt feelings must not be such that we are intimidated and no longer dare to profess our faith.

If, as I suggested at the beginning, we carry out an "objectification" - becoming aware that the problem is not with us but with the person who mocks others - then we will no longer be trapped in our own dismay, but will be able to go beyond our feelings and see the situation from another perspective. This will not yet remove the poison of the mockery and the intended denigration, but it will help us more easily to embark on the path of inner prayer to overcome this poison that seeks to take over our soul and to mitigate its effect on us. From there we can begin to pray for those souls who are in considerable danger. The more we become aware of this, the more urgent it becomes to turn to prayer, even for people who are in public life and who influence others. How will they one day stand before God, who cannot be mocked (cf. Gal 6:7)?

Since Sacred Scripture has also been given to us for our instruction, we can take one more point from today's meditation:

We ourselves must be careful never to ridicule or belittle others. Even if it is necessary to judge actions objectively, to discern them in the light of faith and to draw the appropriate conclusions, we must always be careful not to ridicule people who err, for example. We must not treat our enemies with contempt, not even evil spirits. If we do not adhere to this criterion, we would, in a sense, be adopting the ways of the powers of darkness, and the result would be inner impurity. This is not befitting the children of God who, in the school of the Lord, learn to love even their enemies and thus become more and more like Him.