

1. August

Novena to God the Father

Day 4: "God our Father"

As we meditate on God's love for us and become aware of its immensity, we might ask ourselves what He wants from us and what our attitude towards Him should be.

The answer is clear: God wants us to reciprocate His love, and Jesus gives us an understanding of what this response is all about: "*If you love me, you will keep my commandments*" (Jn 14:15).

What God particularly values is our trust, and He always tries to inspire it in us. Man's fall into sin deeply disturbed his trust in God. Instead of living in an intimate and trusting relationship with our Father, as a result of sin we began to fear Him.

Already in Paradise, the serpent gave man a false image of God, making him believe that the Father was depriving him of something as important as the knowledge of good and evil (cf. Gen 3:5). Satan has continued to work in the same way down through the centuries, giving us a distorted image of God that leads us to distrust our loving Father. Sadly, we have to admit that he has largely succeeded.

Jesus, on the other hand, presents us with a very different image of the Father: He is a God who wants to be in our midst, who cares for us, who knows all our ways, who wants to make everything work for good, and who "*so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son*" (Jn 3:16) to help us carry the burdens of life, to open the door to eternal life and to welcome us as His children, forgiving our sins through His own Son.

If we read the Scriptures from this perspective, we will discover God's struggle to regain our trust in Him everywhere. The Father wants us to trust in His infinite love and mercy. He wants us to come to Him with all that we are and have, and especially with what is dark in us, with our weaknesses and faults.

Of course, God wants us to abandon the ways of sin; to work constantly to overcome our weaknesses; to renew and deepen our commitment to serve Him. But all this must

be done in an atmosphere of loving spiritual intimacy and deep trust in God and those who belong to Him.

Our Father is waiting for us to give ourselves completely to Him and to trust Him in everything, knowing that God alone is able to use everything for our good and our salvation (cf. Rm 8:28). And this trust cannot be merely theoretical; it must mark our whole life and become our fundamental security.

But that is not all! By trusting our Father, we glorify Him and respond to the vocation of our existence. God is unconditional love! And even if we reject Him by abusing our freedom, He will not cease to love us. He constantly invites us to conversion; He calls us to return, like the prodigal son, to the arms of the Father (cf. Lk 15:11-24). And to those who have already set out on the following of Christ, He invites them to grow in love.

For God, our trust in Him is a great gift; we can be sure that it pleases Him greatly!

And this trust is not one-sided; God also trusts us. He gives us His Son, He gives the Church the sacraments and the treasure of evangelisation, He allows us to participate in the building of his Kingdom in this world, despite all our limitations and weaknesses... He entrusts to us the miracle of procreation, in which new human lives are born; He gives us knowledge of so many mysteries of His creation... Last but not least, He entrusts us with His own love and gives us the power over His Heart through our love.