

26. September 2023

The right attitude

NOTE: Instead of listening to the reading of the odd year, we will listen to that of the even year.

Prov 21:1-6,10-13

*The king's heart is a stream of water in the hand of the Lord;
he turns it wherever he will.*

*Every way of a man is right in his own eyes,
but the Lord weighs the heart.*

*To do righteousness and justice
is more acceptable to the Lord than sacrifice.*

*Haughty eyes and a proud heart,
the lamp of the wicked, are sin.*

*The plans of the diligent lead surely to abundance,
but every one who is hasty comes only to want.*

*The getting of treasures by a lying tongue
is a fleeting vapor and a snare of death.*

*The soul of the wicked desires evil;
his neighbor finds no mercy in his eyes.*

*When a scoffer is punished, the simple becomes wise;
when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge.*

*The righteous observes the house of the wicked;
the wicked are cast down to ruin.*

*He who closes his ear to the cry of the poor
will himself cry out and not be heard.*

Today's reading is a collection of proverbs that help us to better order our lives in the light of God. Normally we are accustomed to act according to what our reason dictates, unless we are dominated by feelings that cloud the understanding. However, human reason is limited, especially when it comes to knowledge of supernatural realities. Therefore, the wisdom proverbs can point the way to look at things more from God's perspective.

The Holy Spirit comes to the aid of our understanding and enlightens it, so that it moves in the right direction and does not stop at its natural limits. Moreover, it must be borne in mind that the understanding was darkened as a result of original sin, so that we indispensably need God's light to make our natural potentials receptive to His directives and able to apply the commands of the understanding properly, both in the purely natural and moral realm.

Let us take an example from today's reading: *"Every way of a man is right in his own eyes, but the Lord weighs the heart."*

We know that when a person thinks all their ways are right, they can become very proud, close in on themselves and make themselves inaccessible to others. If we are unable to admit any of our limitations and mistakes, what the book of Proverbs says, *"when a wise man is instructed, he gains knowledge"*, cannot be fulfilled. We may even become completely closed-hearted.

This does not mean that we should always be scrupulous and insecure about everything we do and say, living with constant feelings of guilt. That is not the point. Rather, each of us should be confident in our actions, having examined them carefully. But we should not be satisfied with this self-confidence; we should go one step further. In fact, the Proverbs show us how to go further.

We need to examine our own actions before God, asking the Holy Spirit to instruct or correct us if we are on the wrong path. God will not ignore our plea if we sincerely confess our intentions to Him and openly ask Him to guide us. Then He will either confirm us on our path, correct us, or even prevent us from continuing on our course. It is important that we really ask the Lord, that we are guided by Scripture, and that we seek the advice of wise people if possible, but it is worth noting that not everyone is a good counsellor in these matters.

By pausing to reflect wisely on our actions and not simply following our first spontaneous ideas, we will acquire human maturity. If we also open everything to the Lord and place it at His disposal, we will embark on the path of wisdom and move towards spiritual maturity.

Sacred Scripture makes it clear: "*Who knows his faults?*" (Ps 19:13) It is good to remember this!

Security in our walk must come from the Lord and not from our own understanding or perhaps a sense of superiority. These can build up a false personality, which can even lead to arrogance of heart.

If we confidently and fearlessly examine our attitude before God, especially in important matters, then He will guide us and our security will be in knowing that we are trying to act according to His will.