

HOMILY ON THE APOSTOLIC READING FOR THE 1st SUNDAY OF LUKE, 22/9/2019
(2nd Corinthians 1:21-24 & 2:1-4)

To understand what St. Paul is talking about in today's reading, we have to remember that in his previous Epistle to the Corinthians, the Holy Apostle severely rebuked the Christians of that community for their bad conduct. The result of this was that the Corinthians repented of their mistakes, prompting St. Paul to send a second letter, which offers spiritual consolation and counsel. In the passages we read today, we can admire the deep and sincere concern that the Great Apostle had for his spiritual children. He agonized over their straying from the Gospel, and handled the situation with holy discretion to solve the problems troubling the Church of Corinth.

The first thing we can highlight here is St. Paul's **sincere concern** for those who had fallen, in order to help them amend their ways. This concern led him to neither overlook nor diminish the severity of the issues that were disturbing the Corinthian Church. On the contrary, he intervened and took drastic measures to address the scandals. In so doing, the persons responsible can become conscious of the serious sin they had committed and repent. This way, their place in the Church can be restored in time, and healing can take place. St. Paul here is an example to follow in addressing those who sin in public, whether it is Church or the family home. The spiritual father of the Church and the father of a household both have an interest and responsibility in guiding the repentance and healing of those who have scandalized others and endangered their souls by sinning.

The next point that inspires us is the **profound pain** with which St. Paul addresses those who have strayed. He writes to the Corinthians, "*Out of much affliction and anguish of heart I wrote to you, with many tears, not that you should be grieved, but that you might know the love which I have so abundantly for you*" (2:4). This is the only proven way to bring a good resolution to the problem. No correction can take place in a spirit of anger, where there is yelling or insults. Whatever measures a person takes to address an issue, must be done with love. The other person must understand our anguish and the pain in our hearts. We are crying with them for the evil thing that has taken place. We speak to them not because we care about how their sin affects us, but about what their sin does to them. We seek only their repentance and healing, in a spirit of love and care. There is no other way.

Finally, we can admire St. Paul's **discretion** in addressing public sin. Discretion, according to the Fathers of the Church, is the gift of the Holy Spirit that enlightens us to act in every case in line with the will of God; everything to be done in measure, without exaggeration. This is exactly how the Holy Apostle addressed the Corinthians. When he sent his First Epistle, he knew that they would be deeply sorrowful after reading his words of correction. He was worried about them and wanted to visit them, but he knew that he could not go to them with the situation being what it was. Their pain and anguish would only increase with the Holy Apostle being there among them. So he delayed his visit, explaining that "to spare you I came no more to Corinth" (1:23). "I determined this within myself, that I would not come again to you in sorrow" (2:1). He did not stop being concerned about them, and waited with patience and prayer for the situation to settle down at a distance. The Great Apostle's discretion here teaches us so much! We can do great damage, when in our zeal to guide and correct our neighbor, we demand repentance immediately. We hurry the other, pressuring them to conform to what we are telling them. This lack of discretion and discernment does not bring a person to repentance, but pushes them away from it.

My dear brothers and sisters, the guiding of others is a very difficult task in our current age. It is a time characterized by a complete lack of accountability and the subversion of spiritual values. This disrespectful attitude towards parents, teachers and spiritual fathers is commonplace. To do what is good, it is necessary to follow St. Paul the Apostle's example and act with a selfless spirit of love

towards others. To truly care about them so deeply, that tears flow freely and our hearts are grieved. With this love and discretion, wonderful things will come by the Grace of God. May it always be!