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THE CRUCIFACTORY LIFE

Self denial and the taking up of the cross

In today's Gospel passage the Lord stresses to the apostles and to the whole world that a basic presupposition, for someone to be His disciple, is self-denial and the taking up of the cross. To begin with, setting out with the phrase "whosoever wants", He clarifies that He is not forcing anyone to follow Him. God respects man as a free person and does not deal with him as an unfree object of His. So for this reason He grants to him all the goods of eternal life, only after man's free acceptance.

From the moment man will accept the Lord's calling for eternal life, he must know that there is no other path to obtain it, aside from self-denial and the crucifactory life. We lost paradise, because we wanted to set up our own will. We will return, if we fully submit to God's will, denying our every personal thought and desire which opposes God. So the whole meaning and purpose of our life is found in our mind and heart being healed so much, as without force, naturally and spontaneously they hear and keep the word of God everywhere and always.

However it's a fact that we all bear Adam's fallen nature. Our mind and our desires are sharply drawn by egotism and sin. It is not simple and easy, as in Paradise, for us to turn towards the divine will. A little toil is necessary. So for this reason also the Lord unbreakably associates with self-denial, the taking up of the cross. The egotist must hurt unto death, in order to make God the center of his life and to love his fellow men like himself. Our decisiveness to follow the Lord's will must be such, that we be ready to undergo the greatest pain and the most humiliating death – as was the crucifixion – in order for us to remain faithful to the word of God.

So then we are able to say that we are following the Lord, when for His sake we are denying our own self and are living the crucifactory life. The more someone is indifferent to the fulfilling of these two necessary presuppositions, he is still far from the Lord's path. The more someone lives according to his will and his own judgment and is pursuing a comfortable and pleasant life, he has still not made a beginning of repentance.

The salvation of the soul

Because speaking about self-denial and voluntary crucifixion sounds harsh, the Lord immediately sweetens it very much, reminding His listeners of the trophy which follows, which incomparably surpasses every toil and sacrifice of this life. And this is the salvation of the soul, with which nothing at all that we can obtain here on earth can be compared. Even if the whole world becomes ours, if we lose our soul, we lost everything. If however, we secure our soul for eternity, we are not harmed in the least bit, even if in this life we are extremely poor, sick, tortured and scorned.

With the word soul here we must understand the whole person and the totality of human existence and life. In the Holy Scripture very often from the part and from the beginning, the whole is denoted. For example, from the soul, the whole person is denoted, from the Father, the godhead, whereas from the man, human nature.

The confession of Christ

The Lord does not suffice only to stress that the salvation of the soul is everything for man. He also underlines that what comprises the meaning and the aim of life for the faithful Christian, for most of the people will be considered a chastisement and shame and cause of mockery. Most people to a greater or lesser degree will consider Christ and His teaching scornful. Seeing the humble form with which the Lord came to the world and taking faith as weakness and craziness, love for enemies, meekness, humility, charity and in general all the gospel virtues, he will not accept, will cast off to the sideline or even will persecute those who truly believe in Christ and are trying very diligently to keep His word. So for this reason it is necessary for the believer to never be ashamed of the Lord Jesus before this adulterous and sinful generation of people. All the glory of faith and of life, which are founded in the person of Christ, will be revealed at the Second Coming, when the Lord will come with all His divine glory surrounded by all the angelic ranks.

And because the Second Coming will occur at the end of the ages, the Lord closes His word with the preannouncement of His Transfiguration, which occurred a few days later. At the Transfiguration, the Lord gave a clear image of His and of the righteous ones' glory, which will be revealed at the Second Coming. He also proved that to the degree that someone is being crucified for the sake of Christ, already from this life he is tasting, in advance, of the future divine glory.

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