

2. If you want peace, search for the truth

With the quotation from Psalm 33 – “Who is the man who delights in life, who loves to see the good days? Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking lies. Turn from evil and do good; seek peace and pursue it.” (Psalm 33:13-15) – St. Benedict immediately makes us understand that the constant and faithful search for peace has, as it were, two lungs: that of the desire for a happy life and that of the search for the truth.

It is easy for everyone to recognize the desire for a happy life, but we do not always understand that half a lung does not breathe well, if the search for truth does not work or is left inactive. It would be as though we wanted to breathe without air, without accepting that we need air from outside ourselves to breathe.

St. Benedict makes us understand that to breathe life and joy, and if we want to breathe peace, we must accept to breathe truth.

What does this mean?

In every personal and community situation in which joy and peace and the life in Christ have been lost, I realize that the real problem is always the fact that we have lost contact with the truth, love of the truth and recognition of the truth.

Let us try to understand. What truth are we talking about? Why do we lose contact with this? This is important to understand above all so as not to lose real peace. Experience teaches us that often, when we lose peace, this is not above all, due to the fact that we have lost love, but rather begins from the fact that we have lost truth, truth about God, about others and about ourselves.

The serpent, in fact, ruined the relationship of love between Man and God starting from a lie, using a lie, corrupting the truth between God and Adam and Eve.

«Now the snake was the most cunning of all the wild animals that the LORD God had made. He asked the woman, “Did God really say, ‘You shall not eat from any of the trees in the garden?’” The woman answered the snake: “We may eat of the fruit of the trees in the garden; it is only about the fruit of the tree in the middle of the garden that God said, ‘You shall not eat it or even touch it, or else you will die.’” But the snake said to the woman: “You certainly will not die! God knows well that when you eat of it your eyes will be opened and you will be like gods, who know good and evil.”» (Gen. 3:1-5).

After having sinned, Eve herself recognized, “The snake tricked me” (Gen. 3:13). From this we can understand that the warning that the Rule reminds us of again from Psalm 33 – “Keep your tongue from evil, your lips from speaking lies” – has deep roots, or rather, encourages to examine the roots of what destroys unity and peace in and among us. It reminds us that, in one way or another, it is always possible to be led astray by the serpent who from the beginning seeks to destroy the communion with God and the communion between us, through insinuating lies,

making us transmitters of lies from one to another. When Eve offered the forbidden fruit to Adam, she did it transmitting the lie about God and about themselves which she had accepted from the serpent.

From then on, humanity has lost peace, because the lie destroys fraternal love. Cain also killed his brother Abel because he allowed himself to host the lying thought that God did not love him as He loved Abel. The jealousy between brothers and sisters is always the fruit of a lie which brings us back to the first lie told by the serpent to Eve. We could express it in this way: "God does not really love you. God does not want you to become like Him. God is jealous of you. God has secrets He wishes to keep for himself only, to be able to dominate you." In short, the great lie of the serpent to our forefathers is "God is not a Father!" and from this fundamental lie, necessarily another one is born. "We are not brothers and sisters!"

But, if to be able to pursue peace in fraternal communion, it is necessary to choose truth, then it is important to understand what truth is. When Pilate asked Jesus his famous question, "What is truth?" (Jn 18:38), without waiting for the reply, he did not realize that Jesus had already replied.

«So Pilate said to him, "Then you are a king?" Jesus answered, "You say I am a king. For this I was born and for this I came into the world, to testify to the truth. Everyone who belongs to the truth listens to my voice." Pilate said to him, "What is truth?"» (Jn 18:37-38).

Pilate did not understand or did not want to understand that it is Jesus who speaks the truth, that the truth is by now Christ, the Word of God made flesh who speaks to us. The Word of Christ is now for all of us the complete truth, the truth of everything and of everyone.

Jesus says that He came into the world exactly for this: To "testify to the truth". In Him and through Him, the infinite truth of God, with all the truth about mankind, is offered to us, is presented to us, in the form of testimony.

What does this mean? That we accept the truth only if we believe in Jesus's testimony. And what does it mean to believe in a testimony? It means trusting that what the witness says is true. Truth is a question of trust in Jesus Christ, a question of faith in Him. Pilate did not accept the truth because he did not accept Jesus and His word with trust. He continued to doubt Him. He was afraid that what Jesus said was true, but he did not want to listen to Him rather than to the cries of the crowd of Jews who shouted lies about Him and asked for Him to be crucified.

But let's forget Pilate who was a pagan and let's think about ourselves. We can ask ourselves: Are we really convinced that the truth for us is what Jesus tells us, His witness to the Father? And if the answer is yes, do we really listen to Jesus, really listen to the Gospel to accept the truth and live in it?

These seem obvious questions, and yet, if we are honest, we must admit that we do not always listen to Jesus with humility and attention, and a thirst for the truth. Often, looking at our personal lives and the problems of the community, we must admit that we are listening to something other than Jesus, other than the Gospel.

We listen to the serpent, the Devil, that is, the “Divider”, the Tempter who attracts us and locks us up in interests, desires, passions that have nothing to do with the Kingdom of God which Christ has come to announce to us and to establish in the world. Often, we are more attracted by our individual interests than those of Christ’s, than those of the community or of the Order and the Church.

This temptation has always been there in the Church and was also already among the first disciples of Jesus. They lived with Him, heard Him speak for hours and hours, heard him proclaim the Gospel untiringly, and they heard the explanations of the Gospel, for example the parables, which He specially dedicated to them. They heard Him but often it was as if they did not listen to Him, as if they did not pay attention. Because immediately after, they lived like before, determined by old temptations, as if Jesus had not spoken to them. Even they needed to see Him die and rise again, to live Pentecost to realize that the Truth was only the word and testimony of Christ, and for this, it was necessary to pay the greatest attention to the testimony. The New Testament was born from this consciousness that dazzled the Apostles after the death, resurrection, and ascension to heaven of Jesus. The gift of the Holy Spirit of Pentecost came to confirm and seal this awareness that has become the nucleus and the wellspring of all the tradition of the Church.