

Sunday, September 4, 2011

The Fear of God

When Jacob fled from his brother Esau and went to his uncle Laban, he met with God for his first time (Gen 28), when He appeared to him in a vision at night on a great ladder extended from heaven to earth. God spoke to him, comforted him, and promised him with care and success. When Jacob woke up in the morning he was full of fear and said: *“Surely the Lord is in this place, and I did not know it... How awesome is this place! This is none other than the house of God, and this is the gate of heaven!”* (Gen 28:16, 17)

This incident was engraved in the mind of Jacob throughout his life, it instilled in him the faith that God is present everywhere, and that his heart should be filled with His reverence. Because Joseph was the beloved son of Jacob, he handed to him this spiritual fact; that God is present with us in all circumstances, and everywhere.

This faith touched the heart of Joseph and asserted the reverence of God in his life, accompanied him to Egypt, and protected him from falling in sin with the wife of Potiphar when she thought that she is alone with him. He brought to her attention that God is present with them. When she insisted in her request, he screamed in her face: *“How then can I do this great wickedness, and sin against God?”* (Gen 39:9)

Thus, my beloved, feeling the presence of God instills His fear in our hearts. This fear protects man from sin and its destructive consequence, that is why David always pleaded to God saying, *“Nail my flesh with the fear of You.”* (Ps119: 120).

Likewise, we all pray daily in the prayer of thanksgiving that God may complete all the days of our lives in all peace with His fear.

In the absolution that the priest prays during the sacrament of confession and to the whole congregation at the end of the liturgical prayers, he pleads to God saying: *“Turn us O God, unto the fear of You.”*

The fear of God is a beautiful virtue that we should adorn ourselves with, so that it may guard us from recklessness and falling.

Of course we do not fear God in the sense that we become frightened of Him, but we revere Him as a father and a master to whom honor and respect are due. It is natural that He expects that from us, this is why He admonished the people of Israel at one point saying: *“A son honors his father and a servant his master. If then I am the Father, where is My honor? And if I am a Master, where is My reverence?”* (Malachi 1:6).

We also fear God in a sense that we are careful not to hurt His tender feelings and loving heart with our sins, we should be afraid not to sadden His heart, for he loves us and we also love Him and long to remain steadfast in His love forever.

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