

The Song of Songs as Divine Revelation (2) († Elder Placide Deseille, Abbot of the Holy Monastery of Saint Anthony the Great in France)

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Christ's love for each of us is absolutely unshakeable and unblemished. Our familiarity with Him can't be lost unless we knowingly cease to take account of His will and no longer communicate with His Spirit. Only our own will can place a barrier- or build a wall- between Him and us. Christ then looks at us with the same love, but through the sorrow of a lover who's been disappointed, as He looked at Peter after his denial: 'And Peter remembered the word of the Lord, how he had said to him, "Before the cock crows today, you will deny me three times." And he went out and wept bitterly'. (Luke 22, 61-62).



After every error, however serious it is, after every moment of tepidness, we have to return to Him, with a contrite heart but also in the absolute conviction, the complete certainty, that not only will He forgive us, but that His love for us is immeasurable: 'I shall arise, then, and go round in the city, in the market-places and in the open spaces and seek him whom my soul has loved' (Song, 3, 2). And even though we're still a long way off, He'll see us and will be filled with sympathy. He'll run and hug us tightly and kiss us, as did the father with the prodigal son (Luke 15, 20).

If we return to Him, in the knowledge of our weakness, if we confess our sin, utterly despairing of ourselves but showing Him our complete trust and awaiting everything from Him, then He'll feel greater joy over us than He will for the ninety-nine sheep which weren't brought to perdition (Luke 15, 67). And we'll find the light again, and a loving, close relationship with Him.

This closeness to Christ can become perceptible, to a greater or lesser extent, through our spiritual senses. This is of relatively little importance, or rather, it depends on Christ's Grace. Our physical sensitivity can't grasp even the slightest thing about spiritual realities. If it tries, it'll certainly end in delusion. Spiritual sensitivity is the result of a transformation of our being by the Holy Spirit. And what the Spirit stimulates within us, when He begins to make His presence felt, is the feeling of repentance, contrition of the heart, and an inclination to trust what God

tells us, the word contained in Holy Scripture and passed on through His Church.

It's only this faith in God that allows us to see that God has revealed His existence to us, that He's freely decided to involve us, and that He's working for us. Our 'spiritual senses' are, in fact, simply a more vibrant faith, one that's more internalized, thanks to our progress in our love towards our neighbour.

So, above all, we must found our spiritual life on faith in God's word. Because He's said- and where better than in the Song of Songs- and we know, that Christ loves us, that He wants to be with us all the time and that He listens not only to what we say, but to every motion of our heart, as the Holy Spirit animates it: 'His eyes are like doves by pools of waters, washed in milk, sitting by pools of water; his cheeks are like vials of perfume exuding fragrance' (Song, 5, 12-13). 'The Lord has heard the desire of the poor; your ear has inclined to the preparation of their heart'. (Ps. 9, 38).

So this faith in what God has revealed to us about the plans of His heart is the most fundamental of our spiritual feelings. It allows us to know, with great certainty, the spiritual realities which, as you'd expect, escape our natural understanding and sensations, but which God has consented to reveal to us.

The Song of Songs is the word of God, a revelation of His plans for us. This magnificent revelation, which resonates throughout the whole of the Bible, finds its completion in the words of Christ, Who, in the Gospel of Saint John, tells us that the Father loves us as He loves His Son and that, in loving His Son, we love the Father, being moved to do so in our heart of hearts by the Holy Spirit.