

Redemption of the body

Have you ever imagined what it would be like to love God with everything you got? With every fiber of your being, with every desire of your heart, with every ache in your bones—through and through you want to hold nothing back from Him and in everything in your life, in your possessions, in your time, in your family, in your friends you are serving God.

Listen to the words of this person. This person wrote these words days and weeks before their impending death. We would normally think about who is going to take care of my will, what is going to happen to my family, is this going to hurt, why is this happening to me etc? Listen to the words of this person right before their death:

*All the pleasures of the world, and all the kingdoms of this earth, shall profit me nothing. It is better for me to die in behalf of Jesus Christ, than to reign over all the ends of the earth. Him I SEEK, who died for us: Him I DESIRE, who rose again for our sake. This is the gain which is laid up for me. Pardon me, brethren: **do not hinder me from living**, do not wish to keep me in a state of death; and while I DESIRE to belong to God, do not yet give me over to the world.*

These are the words of St. Ignatius, the third bishop of Antioch who was sentenced to death by wild beasts under the order of Emperor Trajan in the early second century. While he was being transferred to Rome from Syria, he could have pleaded with his friends to help him, yet in his letters, there is no sense of fear, no sense of hesitation but a deep yearning and ache for God in his desires.

He experienced what St. John Paul II would call ‘the redemption of the body’ (Rm 8:23).

Sometimes we can be tempted to see Christianity as the white-knuckling repression of our desires. It is true that St. Paul calls us to crucify “the flesh with its passions and desires.” This sounds like repression but it is actually a call to crucify those inauthentic desires which actually destroy us.

Yet God DESIRES something greater for us. He DESIRES to transform our DESIRES, to unleash our AUTHENTIC DESIRES so that we reject evil and desire the good not JUST because God tells us but because we have personally experienced its truth. If we ask and desire the transformation of our desires, there will come a time when

we will desire to not sin, not just because God told us but because we realize that sin does not lead to authentic human flourishing and acts of virtue and love are what we truly desire.

You will begin to experience the redemption of the body as this transformation of the inner person, the transformation of the heart where we not only know the good, we also sincerely DESIRE the good. This is life according to the spirit where we experience love, joy and peace and especially freedom.

Freedom is the ability to love God from the deep interiority of our heart without the need for some external coercion. "If you are led by the Spirit you are not subject to the law." Freedom exists when our DESIRES and the GOOD unite into one. It is essentially a transformation in love which frees us from the law.

So we are invited today by St. Paul and St. Ignatius to open our hearts to this inner transformation, this redemption of the body where we are not just forced to do the good but freely DESIRE it.

Therefore, let us approach the Eucharist which has this power to transform our desires to live in Christ as St. Ignatius writes:

I desire the bread of God, the heavenly bread, the bread of life, which is the flesh of Jesus Christ, the Son of God... which is the medicine of immortality and the antidote against death, enabling us to live forever in Jesus Christ