 Reading time: 4 min.

Beheading of Saint Paul, fresco, Tre Fontane Abbey, Rome.
In this place the Apostle of the Gentiles suffered martyrdom, and from the bouncing of his severed head sprang forth the three springs that gave the sanctuary its name.

A reflection on the Letter to the Romans 8:35

The apostle Paul, almost two thousand years ago, in his letter to the Romans (chapter 8:35) asked a question that still today challenges us believers in Jesus Christ in a unique way: *Who will separate us from the love of Christ?*

It is not a question addressed to an assembly of theology specialists. Paul offers it as a challenge, first, for himself, and then for those believers who lived in the difficult conditions of the Roman Empire, persecuted and uncertain. Today, that question still speaks to us, to our contemporary anxieties, to our searches for meaning and stability, in this era marked by an uncertainty that is no less worrying.

Deep roots

I would like to comment on this phrase of Paul's starting from the image of a tree. A tree does not stand because someone holds it up from the outside. It stands because it has deep roots that anchor it in the depths of the earth where the fury of the winds and storms do not reach. When Paul uses the word *"rooted in Christ",* he means exactly this. It is not a matter of believing certain things on the level of ideas, but of shaping one's identity, of saying: "My life belongs to Christ, and this fact is fundamental, in the sense that it gives a solid foundation and a structure to my whole existence".

In modern language, we could say that it is about finding a solid foundation for one's identity. In a world where we are constantly pushed to build our image through social media, professional achievements, the approval of others, Paul invites us to read our lives in a radically different way. My true identity, Paul would say today, does not depend on how much money I have accumulated or what position I occupy in society. My identity depends on my decision and will to belong to Jesus Christ, on my decision to recognise myself as unconditionally loved by Him.

Living and being nourished by these roots changes everything. Being deep roots, storms may shake the branches, but they can never uproot the tree. Trials may shake it, but they cannot tear it from the soil of Christ's love. There is the awareness of belonging to Someone who never abandons me.

The nourishment of love

A tree absorbs what it needs to live from the soil in which it is planted. In the same way, the Christian fully lives their faith by nourishing themselves on the love of Christ, because they are rooted in Him. But what does this mean, in concrete terms?

It means finding moments of listening and silence. This choice is not something extraordinary or reserved for the "religious". On the contrary, it is the wise practice of stopping, of reading the Word of God, of praying, of simply being in silence before a mystery greater than ourselves and which we carry in our own hearts. In our time of acceleration and constant noise, these moments lived in a systematic way become increasingly precious and appreciated.

It also means participating in the sacraments, not as the fulfilment of an external duty, but as a vital encounter with the grace of Christ. In relation to the body, we realise the need to eat. If we are attentive, we discover that a similar need exists for the soul; it needs to be nourished. The authentic and sincere Christian discovers that without this nourishment, true life dries up, it goes forward without a compass.

There is an element that brings all this to life. Allowing ourselves to be nourished by the love of Christ means that this love, being authentic, transforms the way we

relate to ourselves and to others. A Christian who is nourished by the love of Christ gradually begins to see life according to a different logic: not the logic of revenge, of ruthless competition, of the desperate search for security through accumulation, of indifference towards everyone. They begin to live guided by the logic of love, the love that forgives, that serves, that trusts. Not because we are good people by nature, but because we have been transformed from within by the love that continually nourishes us.

The “victory” that sustains us

Perhaps the most powerful dimension of Paul’s message concerns “victory”. It is not a theoretical “victory”, but a historical reality: Christ is risen from the dead. And this “victory” over death radically changes the way we face life. We no longer live in the shadow of death. Instead, we live in the light of the resurrection, under the light of the One who, having conquered death, now lives forever.

This does not mean that Christians do not suffer or die. Paul knows this very well. He enumerates the trials that the believer faces, hunger, nakedness, danger, persecution. It means that these trials do not have the final word. It means that when the Christian is faced with illness, bereavement, or injustice, they are never abandoned to themselves in an indifferent universe. They are sustained by the certainty that the One in whom they trust has already won. It is not a certainty that removes suffering, but one that inscribes it within a greater story, a story that has meaning and does not end in nothingness.

A question for today

Paul’s question resonates today, in a world where many seek stability and meaning. Perhaps you are a person of faith, or perhaps you are simply curious about what Christianity has to say about life. In either case, the question deserves reflection. On what do I build my identity? What truly nourishes me? In what do I trust when everything collapses around me?

Paul offers an answer that is not easy, but which is profound. You can build your life on Christ; you can nourish yourself with his love; you can live in the certainty of a

victory that goes beyond any temporal appearance. It is not an answer for those seeking easy paths, but it is an answer that has sustained countless people, saints and sinners, heroes and ordinary people through the most difficult moments of their lives.

Perhaps it is worth considering.