

6. April 2022

Faithfulness to God

Note: Since today's Old Testament reading is also very long, we will content ourselves here with a brief summary and highly recommend reading it in its entirety in the 3rd chapter of the Book of Daniel.

Three young Jewish men were commanded by the king to commit idolatry. Those who refused were to find death in the furnace of fire. The three refused, trusting in God. Thrown into the fiery furnace, the king saw four figures walking around unharmed in the fire, for God had sent them an angel to save them. Nebuchadnezzar had them freed and saw that they had suffered no harm. Then he himself praised their God who had performed this great miracle.

What an extraordinary testimony of these three men who refused to obey a command of the king that was contrary to their faith and whose execution would have offended God! The fearlessness of these three young men and the miracle that God performed in the sight of all made Nebuchadnezzar recognise the truth, even though late. From that moment on, the king did not trouble these Israelites again; he took care of them and, moreover, testified to God's omnipotence.

There is no doubt that the spirit of fortitude was at work in these three men, as in so many martyrs, whose radiant witness strengthens the Church.

Today, Christians all over the world are the most persecuted because of their religious convictions. If we read the signs of the times correctly, we can assume that this threat will increase even more. It is not only militant Islam that persecutes Christians and all those who refuse to accept the doctrine of Mohammed. There is also a certain anti-Christian spirit, which is currently being reinforced. This spirit appears in various guises. Sometimes it is aggressive; sometimes it is camouflaged behind the guise of a lamb. It may hide behind a misunderstood and wrongly practised mercy; it may show itself as a friend of peace and a philanthropist; but what it plots is precisely what this day's reading shows us: to turn men away from God and to make them turn to all kinds of idols, which in our time have only different faces from the statue erected by Nebuchadnezzar.

For us as Christians, it is important to perceive and resist this threat, which also comes from the world of politics and infiltrates even the Church itself in the form of a spirit of relativism.

There can be no stronger resistance than to strive to live our Christian life in holiness, to pass on the witness of Christ and to defend the commandments of God, the Words of Our Lord and the authentic doctrine of the Church without being intimidated. It is not the world that is to permeate the Church; rather, the message of the Gospel is the leaven

that is to become the leaven for all peoples. The message of the Lord has not changed; however much the external conditions in the world have changed.

The three young men in the fiery furnace give us a strong message: Nothing is more important than obeying God; the Lord cannot be denied at any price, even if all the powers turn against us.

We know very well that in our own strength we would not be capable of such a witness. That is why we must prepare and arm ourselves, frequently calling upon the Spirit of fortitude. Whenever we notice that we do not yet fully profess and defend our faith; whenever we are in danger of making concessions, for fear of authorities of any kind, let us invoke the spirit of fortitude! In this way we will train ourselves for another level of confrontations that may come our way.

May the glorious testimony of faith and faithfulness of these three men, as well as divine intervention in this situation, strengthen us to remain faithful to God come what may, and to resist the wiles and snares of the Evil One, however they may come!