

27. January 2023

He certainly will come before too long

*Heb 10:32-39*

*Remember the great challenge of the sufferings that you had to meet after you received the light, in earlier days; sometimes by being yourselves publicly exposed to humiliations and violence, and sometimes as associates of others who were treated in the same way. For you not only shared in the sufferings of those who were in prison, but you accepted with joy being stripped of your belongings, knowing that you owned something that was better and lasting. Do not lose your fearlessness now, then, since the reward is so great. You will need perseverance if you are to do God's will and gain what he has promised. Only a little while now, a very little while, for come he certainly will before too long. My upright person will live through faith but if he draws back, my soul will take no pleasure in him. We are not the sort of people who draw back, and are lost by it; we are the sort who keep faith until our souls are saved.*

The following of Christ will not be without suffering! The Lord Himself suffered and so will His disciples. He made this clear to us, and also gave us to understand the ultimate reason for this suffering: *"The light has come into the world people have preferred darkness to the light because their deeds were evil"* (Jn 3:19).

Unfortunately, the world that has turned away from God does not usually rejoice at the coming of the Messiah. On the one hand, this Messiah reveals God's mercy and offers people forgiveness for their sins; but on the other hand, he also unequivocally announces God's authority.

And it is this latter aspect that those powers that have rebelled against God do not want to accept. They do not want to be reminded that their present power is only temporary and that they will all have to stand before God's judgement. Thus, enmity against God arises on their part, in which the people who remain in darkness are also involved.

Against this background, we can better understand the hard battles that the brethren mentioned today in the Letter to the Hebrews endured. They endured "*many battles and sufferings*" and were "*publicly exposed to humiliations and violence*". They even had their property confiscated, and they accepted it joyfully.

How are we to deal with such situations that may befall us Christians? This is where the concrete application of faith comes in: Christians know that every earthly possession is only temporary, that we cannot cling to it, that it offers only illusory security, that it can vanish any day....

Such a vision allows us to focus on eternal goods and to hope only for eternity and fullness from them. This in no way means that we should be careless in the handling of material goods and not put them at the service of others. On the contrary, it means that one should not bind one's heart to transient things. If such freedom exists, it will not be so difficult to overcome a material loss, or one can even go so far as to accept it joyfully, as today's text states.

Obviously this can only happen if one's eyes are fixed on eternal goods and one faces the theft or loss of goods from this perspective.

Today's text gives us one more piece of advice: "*You will need perseverance if you are to do God's will and gain what he has promised. Only a little while now, a very little while, for come he certainly will before too long.*"

Constancy and perseverance are values of great importance on the path of following Christ. But neither can we acquire them by our own strength, but only by keeping our eyes fixed on the One who is coming and will not delay. In this way, the heart is anchored in the Lord, who is to return at the end of time.

Let us remember the words of the Apostle Peter: "*The Lord is not being slow in carrying out his promises, as some people think he is; rather is he being patient with you, wanting nobody to be lost and everybody to be brought to repentance*" (2 Pet 3:9).

We are called to stand firm in this world! We cannot run away from the battle that has been entrusted to us. Even if we want to evade it, it will not be possible. Certainly

we must not look for the battles and the crosses, but neither can we shrink back when it is time to fight. In faith, we will be able to resist and thus save our souls.

Thus, the Lord teaches us three things today:

- Not to bind our hearts to the things of this world.
- To acquire perseverance by keeping our eyes fixed on the end.
- Not to shrink back from the battle that has been entrusted to us.

All this we can achieve in faith!