

27. July 2023

Fear them not

Mt 10: 26-32

Gospel for the memorial of Saint Pantaleon, Martyr

*At that time, Jesus said to his apostles: Therefore fear them not. For nothing is covered that shall not be revealed: nor hid, that shall not be known. That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops. And fear ye not them that kill the body, and are not able to kill the soul: but rather fear him that can destroy both soul and body in hell. Are not two sparrows sold for a farthing? And not one of them shall fall on the ground without your Father. But the very hairs of your head are all numbered. Fear not therefore: better are you than many sparrows. Every one therefore that shall confess me before men, I will also confess him before my Father who is in heaven.*

The whole gospel is permeated by the message that we should have no fear; only the righteous fear of God. However, the Lord does not hide from His disciples the great dangers that await them. And they themselves witnessed all that they did to the Lord. But Jesus exhorts us not to be troubled by those dangers that threaten our bodily dimension (such as persecutions, enmities, etc.), for these are only temporary.

We should keep in mind that here the Lord is addressing those who come following Him, those who have entered into a communion of life with Him and want to imitate Him. In them the close and trusting relationship with God that is offered to all mankind in the Person of Christ is already realised. The Lord considers them capable of sharing also in the suffering that is connected with following Him: *"The disciple is not above the master, nor the servant above his lord. It is enough for the disciple that he be as his master, and the servant as his lord"* (Mt 10:24-25) He tells them.

The following of Christ is not compatible with a fearful hiding; with avoiding any confrontation; with running away from every difficulty; with seeking to be the favourite of all... On the contrary, the following of Christ must be sustained by the humble awareness of being sent, by trust in God and the courage to proclaim the truth. Indeed, truth is not simply a private matter; the message of the Gospel must reach all people.

Therefore, we must properly oppose any governmental attempt to "relegate the faith to the sacristies".

But fearlessness does not mean recklessness, nor is it the setting aside of necessary precautions. Rather, the courage presented to us in today's Gospel is that which, being aware of the dangers, knows how to face them with a supernatural attitude. Here we must keep in mind the trust in God, on which today's text insists so much. God knows everything, He knows every situation, nothing happens without His consent...The disciple must rely on this certainty! His or her security is in God and in the fulfilment of His will. From this comes the strength and humility necessary to proclaim the Word of the Lord and not to put personal opinions in the foreground.

Now, if we transpose Christ's command, which remains ever valid, to our time, we will certainly conclude that every possible means must be used to transmit the Gospel. We must bear in mind that it is a message destined for all people, including those of other religions. While we must recognise the "seeds of truth" that can be discovered in other religions and the religious fervour that we often find in their members (as the Second Vatican Council's Declaration *Nostra Aetate* suggests), we are all the more called to make the Gospel shine out in all its beauty, so that people may see the light in its fullness.

*"That which I tell you in the dark, speak ye in the light: and that which you hear in the ear, preach ye upon the housetops"* -the Lord tells us. This can mean nothing other than the fact that we cannot withhold the truth of the gospel. This counts both for that time and for our time. Today's world, which is surrounded by increasing darkness, is in dire need of the clear and truthful testimony of the gospel, which cannot in any way covenant with the spirit of the world, for then it would lose its flavour and its strength.

Thanks to modern means of communication, we can proclaim the gospel *"from the rooftops"* to the ends of the earth.

The handling of these media must certainly be done in the Spirit of God, without allowing ourselves to be trapped by the power of attraction they exert and without allowing the message to be trivialised.