

23. May 2024

Vigilance in battle

Mk 9:38-50

John said to Jesus, "Teacher, we saw a man casting out demons in your name, and we forbade him, because he was not following us." But Jesus said, "Do not forbid him; for no one who does a mighty work in my name will be able soon after to speak evil of me. For he that is not against us is for us. For truly, I say to you, whoever gives you a cup of water to drink because you bear the name of Christ, will by no means lose his reward. "Whoever causes one of these little ones who believe in me to sin, it would be better for him if a great millstone were hung round his neck and he were thrown into the sea. And if your hand causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life maimed than with two hands to go to hell, to the unquenchable fire. And if your foot causes you to sin, cut it off; it is better for you to enter life lame than with two feet to be thrown into hell. And if your eye causes you to sin, pluck it out; it is better for you to enter the kingdom of God with one eye than with two eyes to be thrown into hell, where their worm does not die, and the fire is not quenched. For every one will be salted with fire. Salt is good; but if the salt has lost its saltiness, how will you season it? Have salt in yourselves, and be at peace with one another."

Spiritual battles must be fought with spiritual weapons! In order to fight the forces of evil in full vanguard, it is necessary to seriously follow the path of holiness and to have a firm faith, so that all the darts of the evil one can be deflected (cf. Eph 6:16).

Sacred Scripture indicates two ways of dealing with the devil: On the one hand, there is the possibility of fleeing; on the other, there is the possibility of resisting or even counterattacking.

If we feel that we should not expose ourselves unnecessarily to his influence, it is wise to flee. The devil has a thousand ways of influencing souls. Prudence in the spiritual life takes care not to remain unnecessarily in the direct field of action of evil. This applies to many areas of our lives, especially the influence of the media, through which people can easily be manipulated in an anti-Christian spirit. So there are many influences that

we can avoid in advance, as long as we are not weakened by curiosity, naivety and lack of vigilance.

The counter-attack against the devil through the Word of God and prayer requires us to be well prepared. To do this, we must be under the active protection of the Lord and strengthen our fortress. When we speak of 'God's active protection', we mean living in a state of grace. To 'strengthen our inner fortress' means to live a spiritual life that is transparent before God; that there is nothing between us and Him, at least as far as we can see...

If we listen carefully to the Holy Spirit, we will be able to know when to flee from the devil and when to confront him directly. The more responsibility we are given in spiritual warfare, the more subtly we will be able to discern which response to choose.

The second part of today's Gospel exhorts us to be extremely vigilant against sin. Logically, the struggle against sin is an essential part of the spiritual battle. Although the Lord is always merciful to our weakness, the exhortation to fight sin with the utmost vigilance and determination remains.

The moral laxity that is spreading in the Church is a deadly danger. If sin is no longer fought resolutely, the devil has already gained much ground. We are weakened from within and the castle falls into the hands of the enemy. The clear renunciation of sin and the logical consequence of avoiding it and overcoming it in the Lord will give us strength in every step we have to take. In this way we will be able to take our rightful place in the army of the Lamb and be equipped with the proper armour for the inevitable battle.