

22. March 2025

## MEDITATIONS FOR LENT “Proclaiming the Gospel fearlessly”

Before entering into the theme, let us briefly review the Lenten meditations: the spirit of discernment (*discretio*) urges us to enter consciously into a spiritual battle. Those who follow Christ know this struggle well. There are, however, two particular circumstances that we must always keep in mind, so that we *"do not box as one beating the air"* (cf. 1 Cor 9:26):

1. The enemy is not only attacking from outside the Church, but also from within, and he has wide areas under his influence.
2. He has penetrated right into the hierarchy, and from the very top he is trying to impose his pernicious course on the whole Church.

With this in mind, let us continue to listen to St Paul's instructions to be prepared for battle:

*"Stand therefore, having girded your loins with truth, and having put on the breastplate of righteousness, and having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace; besides all these, taking the shield of faith, with which you can quench all the flaming darts of the evil one"* (Eph 6:14-16).

In yesterday's meditation we already spoke of the importance of being girded with the truth as a prerequisite for fighting the battle that has been entrusted to us. Then we mentioned the "breastplate of righteousness".

Righteousness means giving everyone what is due, being attentive to cases where the dignity of a person is threatened by injustice, and guaranteeing their rights to the best of our ability. This applies both to the personal sphere and to society in general. The Lord has given us unsurpassable advice for practicing true justice: *"Whatever you wish that men would do to you, do so to them; for this is the law and the prophets"* (Mt 7:12).

If we take this as a 'golden rule' and try to put it into practice, then we will train ourselves in righteousness and it will surround us like a protective wall, for true righteousness comes from God, who is righteousness Himself.

The two elements of spiritual armour we have seen so far - girding ourselves with truth and putting on the breastplate of righteousness - can be seen more as protective measures, although they serve not only to defend us but also to weaken demonic attacks. The next weapon of which St Paul speaks is decisive in the attack, and by using it we can make a devastating intervention in the kingdom of evil.

*“Stand therefore, having shod your feet with the equipment of the gospel of peace.”*

Nothing can do more harm to the forces of evil than to snatch away their prey, and this is precisely what our Lord does. The conversion of a person from darkness to light and from indifference to zeal for Christ is the worst scenario for the kingdom of darkness. That is why the demons do everything in their power to prevent this from happening.

In this context, we again have to painfully note the present reality of the Church. If it is claimed that all religions are paths to God, as the Abu Dhabi declaration and the statements of the head of the Church in Singapore suggest, then we are faced with the worst scenario for the Church's evangelising mission. This is a concrete perversion of Christ's command to His disciples, and ultimately only those spirits who fear the truthful and complete proclamation of the Gospel can be behind it.

Against this background, it also becomes clear why we must distance ourselves forcefully from such errors. How can I proclaim the Gospel if at the same time I am not convinced of the uniqueness and singularity of the Son of God in the history of salvation? What then do I intend to tell people about Jesus? The decisive thing is missing, the core of the message has been erased; the Spirit has been extinguished; error is served, Jesus Christ is denied and people are deceived.

Perhaps some will now understand why I insist that we are facing a particular situation in the Church, which I regard as a 'state of emergency'. In the old days, missionaries were usually supported and sent out by the Church authorities to carry the Gospel message to the whole world, under untold hardship and suffering.

Now, however, it has come to pass that if they want to remain faithful to the Gospel and continue to proclaim the Name of Jesus, they will find themselves in contradiction with the line of the present ecclesiastical authority, and that at decisive points. What a paradoxical situation!

In this context, the apostles come to mind, whom the religious authorities of the time wanted to forbid from proclaiming the Name of Jesus. However, the apostles were not forced to obey such orders. They obeyed God rather than men (Acts 5:29). Whoever has eyes to see and ears to hear will realise that we have now arrived at a similar situation. Such an error cannot be tolerated even in its slightest expression.

Despite the paradoxical situation, the Gospel must continue to be proclaimed in obedience to the word of Jesus and the perennial Magisterium of the Church. No one can submit to the demand to relativise the message, not even at the cost of our profession or our life. This applies to all Catholics, including those who have a ministry in the Church and have been called in a special way to proclaim the Gospel.

If the present leaders of the Church no longer proclaim the Gospel authentically - and this is the reality - then God will have recourse to other means, for no one owns the Gospel but God Himself.