

25. June 2023

## Being courageous for the Lord

*Mt 10:26-33*

*At that time, Jesus said to his disciples: do not be afraid of them. Everything now covered up will be uncovered, and everything now hidden will be made clear. What I say to you in the dark, tell in the daylight; what you hear in whispers, proclaim from the housetops. Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; fear him rather who can destroy both body and soul in hell. Can you not buy two sparrows for a penny? And yet not one falls to the ground without your Father knowing. Why, every hair on your head has been counted. So there is no need to be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. 'So if anyone declares himself for me in the presence of human beings, I will declare myself for him in the presence of my Father in heaven. But the one who disowns me in the presence of human beings, I will disown in the presence of my Father in heaven.*

Courage is one of the marks of a 'warrior of the light', which is what we, as Christians, are called to be in the combat we have been given to fight. Courage does not mean being reckless, optimistic or confident in our own strength, as heroes are often painted. The reckless and the optimistic do not measure the situation properly, fail to see the real danger and act as if it does not exist, and are carried away by a rather superficial feeling. The courage to which today's Gospel exhorts us means to live with full trust in God and to act with the certainty that He has everything in His hands.

Jesus speaks these words before sending out His disciples two by two, knowing full well the dangers, rejections, persecutions and sufferings that would befall them. The powers of evil carry out their work with great malice, seeking to spread terror; but they are not omnipotent. For all their wickedness and cunning, God is able to integrate them into His plan, though they, in their blindness, are unaware of it.

The courage the Lord speaks of in the Gospel comes from the certainty that God sustains us and sends us to fulfil an important mission. The Word must be proclaimed from the housetops! It will know how to make its way even in the midst of persecution and rejection. The disciple sent by the Lord is under God's special protection, and, whatever the scenario in which the persons finds themselves, God will always be with them.

That is why we are also exhorted to confess Christ before people and not to shrink back when faced with hostility or indifference. This is what God expects of us, and He Himself makes us capable of it. This in no way means that we should not be prudent and careful with the good that has been entrusted to us. Rather, it means that we can never deny our faith out of fear. This exhortation does not only apply to those countries in which the Christian faith is openly persecuted, but also to the so-called democratic states, in which the signs of persecution are also increasing.

Confessing Jesus also means defending Christian values and convictions, bearing witness to them even in these times when the spirit of the world no longer wants to call sin by its name; when other forms of life that are contrary to the order of creation are to be equated with marriage; when abortion is to be proclaimed a human right; when the absurd gender ideology is to be officially established, among many other things.... The situation becomes particularly dramatic when even the Church allows itself to be infected by the spirit of the world, which, in its essence, is an anti-Christian spirit.

This exhortation to boldly confess the Lord before others is always topical for us Christians. If we follow it, Jesus will also declare Himself in our favour before His Father and will not have to deny us.

We seem to have come to a time when it is particularly necessary to bear witness to the Lord. If, for example, there is a growing tendency in our Church to put all religions on the same level, claiming to build together a purely human peace and brotherhood, we must remember these words of the Lord:

*"Peace I bequeath to you, my own peace I give you, a peace which the world cannot give, this is my gift to you. Do not let your hearts be troubled or afraid"* (Jn 14:27).

True peace results from reconciliation with God through Jesus Christ. Therefore, the best way to work for peace is to proclaim the gospel in word and deed. This is how the Lord has ordained it! Today, we must be courageous in doing so, because the spirit of the world, wherever it manifests itself, wants to extinguish, modify, relativise or even pervert the testimony of the Redeemer. We must intelligently counteract this by proclaiming Jesus as the only Saviour of the world and by singing the praises of the Holy Trinity.

In God the Father's Message to Mother Eugenia Ravasio, a private revelation which was acknowledged by the local bishop at the time and which I greatly appreciate, the Heavenly Father says the following in relation to other religions:

"You too, who know no other religion than the one in which you were born and which is not the true religion, open your eyes: here is your Father; the One who created you and wants to save you! I come to you to bring you the truth and, with it, salvation".

As true disciples of the Lord, we are therefore called to proclaim with courage the One who alone can say of Himself: *"I am the Way; I am Truth and Life. No one can come to the Father except through me"*(Jn 14:6).