Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 10:26-33): Jesus said to the Twelve: "Fear no one. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

"Do not be afraid of those who kill the body"

Fr. Antoni POU OSB Monk of Montserrat
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Today, after choosing the twelve, Jesus sends them to preach and instructs them. He warns them about the persecution they may likely suffer and advises them on their attitude: "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Mt 10,28). The narrative of this Sunday develops the theme of persecution in a style reminiscent of the last Beatitude of the Sermon on the Mount (cf. Mt 5,11).

Jesus' speech is paradoxical: on the one hand, he tells us "Do not be afraid", and he presents us with a providential Father who cares even for sparrows; on the other hand, he does not tell us that this Father will save us from troubles, rather the opposite: if we are his followers, we are likely to share his fate and that of the other prophets. So, how can we understand this? God's protection is his ability to give life to our person (our soul), and to provide happiness even in tribulations and persecutions. He is the one who can give us the joy of His Kingdom —which we can

already enjoy here— and is our hope of eternal life: “Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father” (Mt 10,32).

Trusting that God will be with us in difficult times gives us courage to speak Jesus' words in the light (cf Mt 10:27); moreover, it gives us the energy we need to do good, so that through our works people can give glory to our heavenly Father. Accordingly, Saint Anselm teaches us: “Do everything for God and for that happy and eternal life our Savior deigns to grant us in Heaven.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- "I have his promise; I am surely not going to rely on my own strength! I have what he has written… What message? Know that I am with you always, until the end of the world!" (Saint John Chrysostom)
- " There is no Christian mission marked by tranquility! Difficulties and tribulations are part of the work of evangelization and we are called to find in them the opportunity to test the authenticity of our faith and of our relationship with Jesus" (Francis)
- “The disciple of Christ must not only keep the faith and live on it, but also profess it, confidently bear witness to it, and spread it… Service of and witness to the faith are necessary for salvation…” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, No. 1816)