

Sunday 12th (A) in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 10,26-33): Jesus said to his apostles: «Do not be afraid. There is nothing covered that will not be uncovered, and nothing hidden that will not be made known. What I am telling you in the dark, you must speak in the light. What you hear in private, proclaim from the housetops.

»Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but have no power to kill the soul. Rather be afraid of him who can destroy both body and soul in hell. For only a few cents you can buy two sparrows, yet not one sparrow falls to the ground without your Father's consent. As for you, every hair of your head has been counted.

»So do not be afraid: you are worth much more than many sparrows. Whoever acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven. Whoever rejects me before others I will reject before my Father in heaven».

«Do not be afraid of those who kill the body»

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Today, after choosing the Twelve Apostles, Jesus sends them out to preach and He instructs them. He warns them against persecutions they are likely to suffer, and gives them some advice regarding what their attitude should be: «Do not be afraid of those who kill the body, but have no power to kill the soul. Rather be afraid of him who can destroy both body and soul in hell» (Mt 10:28). This Sunday introduction develops the subject of the persecution of Christ in a style reminding us of the last part of the Sermon of the Mount Beatitudes (cf. Mt 5:11).

Jesus' discourse is paradoxical: on one hand He says twice «do not be afraid», and He introduces us to a providential Father that even takes care of small birds; but,

on the other hand, He does not mention whether this same Father will protect us from these setbacks; rather, He points out that if we follow him, we are bound to experience the same fate that befell over him and all the other prophets. How can we, therefore, understand this protection under God? God's protection is God's capability of life-giving for us (our soul), while rendering us happy even under persecutions and tribulations. He is who grants us the joy of his Kingdom, that stems from a profound life we can already enjoy here, and is our guarantee of eternal life: «Whoever acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my Father in heaven» (Mt 10:32).

The conviction that in the difficult moments of our life God is on our side, will supply us the needed courage to proclaim Jesus' words from the housetops (cf Mt 10:27), and furnish us too with the energy we require to do good, so that, through our deeds, people may glorify our Father in Heaven. St. Anselm teaches us: «Do everything for God and for that happy and eternal life our Saviour deigns to grant us in Heaven».