

Friday of the Fourteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 10:16-23): Jesus said to his Apostles: “Behold, I am sending you like sheep in the midst of wolves; so be shrewd as serpents and simple as doves. But beware of men, for they will hand you over to courts and scourge you in their synagogues, and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake as a witness before them and the pagans. When they hand you over, do not worry about how you are to speak or what you are to say. You will be given at that moment what you are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you.

Brother will hand over brother to death, and the father his child; children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but whoever endures to the end will be saved. When they persecute you in one town, flee to another. Amen, I say to you, you will not finish the towns of Israel before the Son of Man comes.”

“You will be hated by all because of my name”

Fr. Josep LAPLANA OSB Monk of Montserrat
(Montserrat, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, the Gospel emphasizes the troubles and contradictions we Christians have to suffer because of Christ and his Gospel, and how we must stand firm and persevere to the end. Jesus promised us: “I am with you always, until the end of the age” (Mt 28:20); but He did not promise his disciples an easy journey; on the contrary, He told them: “You will be hated by all because of my name” (Mt 10:22).

The Church and the world are two realities of "difficult" coexistence. Church is

bound to convert the world to Jesus Christ, but our world is not a neutral reality, as if of virgin wax waiting for the mold to shape it. This is what it would have been like, had there not been a history of sin between the creation of man and his redemption. But, as an isolated from God structure, the world obeys another lord, that St. John's Gospel names as “the lord of this world”, the soul's foe, whom —when baptized— the Christian has promised to disobey to, to stand up to him, so as to only belong to Jesus Christ and to the Mother Church, which begot him in Jesus Christ.

However, though christened, we still live in this world and not somewhere else; we do not give up our earthly citizenship nor do we deny our honest contribution to sustain and improve our world; our civic duties are also Christian duties; to pay taxes is a duty of fairness for Christians. Jesus said that his followers are in the world, but do not belong to the world (cf. Jn 17:14-15). We do not unconditionally belong to the world, we only belong to Jesus Christ and to the Church —our true spiritual homeland— that is down here in Earth and goes through space and time barriers to finally disembark us in our definite destination, Heaven.

This double citizenship necessarily stumbles upon the forces of sin and its influence that powers the worldly mechanisms. When reviewing the history of Church, Newman said that “Church's brand is persecution and, perhaps, a longer-lasting one.”

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“The athlete does not win because he strips himself, for he undresses precisely in order to begin the contest, whereas he only deserves to be crowned as victorious when he has fought properly.” (Saint Paulinus of Nola)

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“Jesus tells us: ‘I send you out as sheep in the midst of wolves’. The Christian will have to be rather prudent; at times even shrewd. These are virtues that are accepted by the logic of the Gospel. But never violence.” (Francis)

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“We can therefore hope in the glory of heaven promised by God to those who love him and do his will. In every circumstance, each one of us should hope, with the grace of God, to persevere ‘to the end’ ...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, N° 1821)