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
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Today, the Gospel highlights the difficulties and contradictions that Christians will have to endure for the sake of Christ and His Gospel, and how they must resist and persevere until 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 followers an easy path. On the contrary, He said: "You will be hated by all because of my name" (Mt 10:22).

The Church and the world are two realities of “difficult” coexistence. The world, which the Church must convert to Jesus Christ, is not a neutral reality, as if it were virgin wax waiting for a seal to give it shape. This would have been the case only if there had been no history of sin between the creation of man and his redemption. The world, as a structure apart from God, obeys another master, whom the Gospel of John refers to as “the prince of this world,” the enemy of the soul, to whom the Christian made a vow of disobedience on the day of their baptism, to stand up against him, and to belong solely to the Lord and the Mother Church who gave birth to him in Jesus Christ.

Still, we continue to live in this world and not another; nor do we deny our honest contribution to sustain

and improve it —the duties of civic citizenship are also Christian duties; paying taxes is a duty of justice for Christians. Thus, Jesus said that His followers are in the world, but not of the world (cf. Jn 17:14-15). We do not belong to the world unconditionally; we belong entirely to Jesus Christ and to the Church, our true spiritual homeland, which transcends the barrier of space and time and leads us to our final homeland in heaven.

This dual citizenship inevitably clashes with the forces of sin and dominion that move worldly mechanisms. Perhaps this is why, reflecting on the history of the Church, Newman said that "persecution is the mark of the Church and perhaps the most enduring of all."

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “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)

- “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)

- “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, Nº 1821)