Third Sunday in Ordinary Time (A)

Gospel text (*Mt* 4:12-23): When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and went to live in Capernaum by the sea, in the region of Zebulun and Naphtali, that what had been said through Isaiah the prophet might be fulfilled: “Land of Zebulun and land of Naphtali, the way to the sea, beyond the Jordan, Galilee of the Gentiles, the people who sit in darkness have seen a great light, on those dwelling in a land overshadowed by death light has arisen.” From that time on, Jesus began to preach and say, “Repent, for the kingdom of heaven is at hand.”

As he was walking by the Sea of Galilee, he saw two brothers, Simon who is called Peter, and his brother Andrew, casting a net into the sea; they were fishermen. He said to them, “Come after me, and I will make you fishers of men.” At once they left their nets and followed him. He walked along from there and saw two other brothers, James, the son of Zebedee, and his brother John. They were in a boat, with their father Zebedee, mending their nets. He called them, and immediately they left their boat and their father and followed him. He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people.

“Jesus went around all of Galilee”

Fr. Josep RIBOT i Margarit
(Tarragona, Spain)

Today, Jesus gives us a lesson in “holy prudence,” perfectly compatible with boldness and courage. Indeed, He—who does not fear proclaiming the truth—decides to withdraw when He learns that, just as they had done with John the Baptist, His enemies want to kill Him: “Go away, leave this area because Herod wants to kill you” (Lk 13:31). If the One who went about doing good was targeted by His detractors, we should not be surprised if we too suffer persecution, as the Lord foretold.

“When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee” (Mt 4:12). It would be imprudent to court danger without a proportionate reason. Only in prayer do we discern whether silence or inactivity—letting time pass—are signs of wisdom, or of cowardice and lack of fortitude. Patience, the

science of peace, helps us decide serenely in difficult moments, provided we do not lose our supernatural outlook.

“He went around all of Galilee, teaching in their synagogues, proclaiming the gospel of the kingdom, and curing every disease and illness among the people” (Mt 4:23). Neither threats, nor fear of what people might say, nor possible criticism should hold us back from doing good. Those of us called to be salt and light—agents of good and truth—cannot give in to the blackmail of threats, which so often amount to nothing more than hypothetical or merely verbal danger.

Let us be resolute and bold, without seeking excuses to postpone apostolic action until “later.” It is said that “later” is the adverb of the defeated. That is why Saint Josemaría recommended “Here is a recipe to make your apostolic spirit effective: make definite plans, not for the whole week but for the day ahead, for this moment and the next”.

Fulfilling God’s will, being just in every setting, and following the judgment of a well-formed conscience require a fortitude we must ask for—for everyone—because the danger of cowardice is great. Let us ask our Mother in Heaven to help us always and in everything to do God’s will, imitating her fortitude at the foot of the Cross.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “I am not devoid of merit as long as he is not of mercy. But what if I am aware of my many failings? Then, where failings abounded, grace abounded all the more. And if the mercies of the Lord are from eternity to eternity, I for my part will chant the mercies of the Lord forever.” (Saint Bernard)

- “Put out into deep water an let down your nets for catch. You too are called to become ‘fishers of men’. Don’t hesitate to spend your life witnessing joyfully to the Gospel, especially among your peers.” (Francis)

- “Those who with God's help have welcomed Christ's call and freely responded to it are urged on by love of Christ to proclaim the Good News everywhere in the world....” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, № 3)