

Thursday of the Thirtieth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 13:31-35): Some Pharisees came to Jesus and said, “Go away, leave this area because Herod wants to kill you.” He replied, “Go and tell that fox, ‘Behold, I cast out demons and I perform healings today and tomorrow, and on the third day I accomplish my purpose. Yet I must continue on my way today, tomorrow, and the following day, for it is impossible that a prophet should die outside of Jerusalem.’”

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned. But I tell you, you will not see me until the time comes when you say, Blessed is he who comes in the name of the Lord.”

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, how many times I yearned to gather your children together, but you were unwilling!”

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Today we can admire Jesus' steadfastness in fulfilling the mission entrusted to him by his heavenly Father. He will not be deterred by anything: “I cast out demons and I perform healings today and tomorrow” (Luke 13:32). With this attitude, the Lord set the standard of conduct that the messengers of the Gospel would follow throughout the centuries in the face of persecution: not to yield to temporal power. Saint Augustine says that, in times of persecution, pastors should not abandon the faithful: neither those who will suffer martyrdom nor those who will survive, like the Good Shepherd, who, seeing the wolf coming, does not abandon the flock, but defends it. But given the fervor with which all the pastors of the Church were prepared to shed their blood, it suggests that it would be best to draw lots to decide which of the clergy would offer themselves for martyrdom and which would seek safety to then care for the survivors.

In our time, unfortunately, we frequently receive news of religious persecutions, tribal violence, or ethnic uprisings in Third World countries. Western embassies advise their citizens to leave the region and repatriate their personnel. The only ones who remain are the missionaries and volunteer organizations, because it would seem like a betrayal to abandon "their own" in difficult times.

“Jerusalem, Jerusalem, you who kill the prophets and stone those sent to you, how many times I yearned

to gather your children together as a hen gathers her brood under her wings, but you were unwilling! Behold, your house will be abandoned” (Luke 13:34-35). This lament of the Lord produces in us, Christians of the 21st century, a special sadness, due to the bloody conflict between Jews and Palestinians. For us, that region of the Middle East is the Holy Land, the land of Jesus and Mary. And the cry for peace in all countries should be more intense and heartfelt for peace in Israel and Palestine.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “God desires not death, but faith. God thirsts not for blood, but for self-surrender. God is appeased not by slaughter, but by the offering of your free will.” (Saint Peter Chrysologus)
- “Jerusalem was the bride, the betrothed of the Lord: He really loved her!”. However, “she wasn’t aware of the Lord’s visitations” and she “made the Lord weep”... Jerusalem fell because of distraction, for not welcoming the Lord who came to save her”. (Francis)
- “On the threshold of his Passion Jesus announced the coming destruction of this splendid building, of which there would not remain "one stone upon another". By doing so, he announced a sign of the last days, which were to begin with his own Passover...” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 585)