

Wednesday of the Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 21,12-19): Jesus said to his disciples, «People will lay their hands on you and persecute you; you will be delivered to the Jewish courts and put in prison, and for my sake you will be brought before kings and governors. This will be your opportunity to bear witness. So keep this in mind: do not worry in advance about what to answer, for I will give you words and wisdom that none of your opponents will be able to withstand or contradict. You will be betrayed even by parents, and brothers, by relatives and friends, and some of you will be put to death. But even though you are hated by all for my name's sake, not a hair of your head will perish. Through perseverance you will possess your own selves».

«Through perseverance you will possess your own selves»

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Today, we pay attention to this short but sharp sentence of our Lord, which sticks into our soul and makes us wonder: why perseverance is so important? why does Jesus tell us our salvation depends upon the exercise of this virtue?

Because the disciple is no more than his Master —«you will be hated by all for my name's sake» (Lk 21:17)—, and if the Lord was a sign of contradiction, we, his disciples, must necessarily be one too. The belligerents will get hold of the Kingdom of God, those who fight against the enemies of the soul, those who energetically combat, as St. Josemaria Escriva liked to say, “this most beautiful war of peace and love”, which Christian life consists of. All roses have thorns, and the way to Heaven is not without difficulties and obstacles. This is why, without the cardinal virtue of fortitude, our good intentions would turn out unfruitful. And perseverance is part of fortitude. Perseverance, concretely, drives us to the strength we need to carry our contradictions with joy.

Perseverance, in its maximum degree, is accomplished at the Cross. This is why, perseverance confers freedom by granting the possession of oneself through love. Christ's promise is indefectible: «Through perseverance you will possess your own selves!» (Lk 21:19), and this is so because what is saving us is the Cross. It is the strength of love that gives each one of us the patient and joyous acceptance of God's will, when, in a first moment, it upsets —as it happens at the Cross— our poor human will.

Only in a first moment, because afterwards, the overflowing energy of perseverance is liberated to help us understand the difficult science of the Cross. This is why, perseverance engenders patience, which goes much beyond simple resignation. Even more so. It has nothing to do with stoical attitudes. Patience decisively contributes to understand that the Cross is, well before pain, essentially love.

Our Mother in Heaven, who understood better than anyone else this saving truth, will help us understanding it too.