Wednesday of the Thirty-fourth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 21:12-19): Jesus said to the crowd: “They will seize and persecute you, they will hand you over to the synagogues and to prisons, and they will have you led before kings and governors because of my name. It will lead to your giving testimony. Remember, you are not to prepare your defense beforehand, for I myself shall give you a wisdom in speaking that all your adversaries will be powerless to resist or refute. You will even be handed over by parents, brothers, relatives, and friends, and they will put some of you to death. You will be hated by all because of my name, but not a hair on your head will be destroyed. By your perseverance you will secure your lives.”

“By your perseverance you will secure your lives.”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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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 is perseverance 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 because of my name” (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 Saint 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: “By your perseverance you will secure your lives” (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 the first moment, it upsets —as it happens at the Cross— our poor human will.

Only in the 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 far beyond simple resignation. Even more so. It has nothing to do with stoical attitudes. Patience decisively helps us 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 understand it too.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “Patience is the root and protector of all virtues: it consists in suffering serenely the evils coming from others and in being tormented with no resentment against the one who inflicts them.” (Saint Gregory the Great)

- “This is the grace for which we must ask: perseverance. And that the Lord may save us from fantasies of triumphalism. Triumphalism is not Christian, it is not of the Lord. The daily journey in the presence of God, this is the way of the Lord. Continue on the path.” (Francis)

- “Martyrdom is the supreme witness given to the truth of the faith: it means bearing witness even unto death. The martyr bears witness to Christ who died and rose, to whom he is united by charity. He bears witness to the truth of the faith and of Christian doctrine…” (Catechism Of The Catholic Church, Nº 2473)