April 23rt Saint Adalbert of Prague, bishop and martyr

Gospel text (*Jn* 15:18-21): Jesus said to his disciples; “If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first. If you belonged to the world, the world would love its own; but because you do not belong to the world, and I have chosen you out of the world, the world hates you. Remember the word I spoke to you, ‘No slave is greater than his master.’ If they persecuted me, they will also persecute you. If they kept my word, they will also keep yours. And they will do all these things to you on account of my name, because they do not know the one who sent me.”

“If the world hates you, realize that it hated me first”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
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Today, the figure of Saint Adalbert of Prague (bishop and martyr, c. 956–997) reminds us that true fruitfulness is born from union with Christ, even when that union involves rejection. This saint personally experienced the words of Jesus: “If the world hates you, know that it hated me first” (Jn 15:18).

Born into a noble family in Bohemia, Adalbert received a careful education, embracing the ideal of a reformed Church—poor and faithful to the Gospel. Ordained a priest and later chosen as Bishop of Prague, he soon encountered a harsh reality: a society Christianized only in appearance, marked by violence, slavery, and power struggles among rival clans.

His episcopal ministry was filled with tensions. He courageously preached against moral abuses, defended the indissolubility of marriage, and opposed the slave trade. These positions brought him the hostility of the powerful and the misunderstanding of many of the faithful. He was not rejected out of whim, but because he identified himself with Christ and His truth. His life reminds us that following the Lord does not guarantee human success, but fidelity.

On more than one occasion, Saint Adalbert was forced to leave his see and seek refuge in monastic life, especially in Rome, where he learned to unite pastoral action with a deep interior life. In this constant movement between solitude and mission, his vocation was purified.

Finally, moved by apostolic zeal, Adalbert departed as a missionary among the Prussian peoples, who were still pagan. He knew that this path could lead him to death, but he had learned that the disciple is not greater than his Master (cf. Jn 15:20). In the year 997, he was killed while proclaiming the Gospel. His martyrdom sealed a life given without reserve.

The life of Saint Adalbert becomes a living illustration of the words of Jesus: we do not belong to the world, yet we are sent into the world to bear witness, even when the price is the cross.