Heeding or Silencing the Conscience

Daily Gospel / Liturgycal Cycle C

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Holy Gospel of Jesus Christ according to Saint Matthew 14: 1-12.
Herod the tetrarch heard of the reputation of Jesus and said to his servants, "This man is John the Baptist. He has been raised from the dead; that is why mighty powers are at work in him." Now Herod had arrested John, bound him, and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, for John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Although he wanted to kill him, he feared the people, for they regarded him as a prophet. But at a birthday celebration for Herod, the daughter of Herodias performed a dance before the guests and delighted Herod so much that he swore to give her whatever she might ask for. Prompted by her mother, she said, "Give me here on a platter the head of John the Baptist." The king was distressed, but because of his oaths and the guests who were present, he ordered that it be given, and he had John beheaded in the prison. His head was brought in on a platter and given to the girl, who took it to her mother. His disciples came and took away the corpse and buried him; and they went and told Jesus.

Matthew 14: 1-12.

Introductory Prayer:
Lord, I believe you are looking for me. You stand ready to come to me in this moment of prayer. You want to help me see your love and where I can grow to be more like you. Thank you for your patience and goodness with me. I want to give myself totally to you.

Petition:
Lord, help me to hear your voice more clearly today.

1. A Disturbing Voice:
John the Baptist had been sent to prepare the way for Christ. He was a witness to the holiness of God. He tried to awaken the sense of sin and the need for repentance. He spoke clearly and was afraid of no one. Sometimes the voice of God in my conscience can be bothersome, like John's voice was to Herod. Yet a clear reminder of what is right and wrong is an act of mercy from God. He is giving us a chance to awaken from our lethargy and realize that our immortal souls are at stake. I should thank God when my conscience reminds me of things I need to change in my life.

2. What's Wrong With a Little Entertainment?
There is nothing wrong with having celebrations in our life and moments of joy and relaxation. A Christian's life is rich in moments of happiness. But, as was the case in Herod's birthday party, there exists the danger of looking for entertainment and relaxation in activities or pastimes which can simply manipulate our passions, weaken our morals, and deeply offend God. If we are unable to choose our entertainment wisely we can end up throwing away the richness of our spiritual inheritance for cheap thrills. Herod ends up as a murderer rather than a good king. His unchecked passions of sensuality and human respect make him use his power to destroy rather than protect. I must remember that even in the moments of relaxation I have the responsibility to protect and foster my Christian identity. I should look for healthy pastimes where I can share the joy of Christian living with my friends and family.

3. The Proverbial Second Chance:
When Herod hears of Jesus, his conscience pricks him. He knew he had killed a man of God. Somewhere in his heart he knew that God would have the last word. The presence of Christ is an additional grace that the Father offers Herod so that he may be converted. Unfortunately it is a grace that Herod will not take advantage of, just as he did not take advantage of the presence of John the Baptist. In my own life, how many times does the Father have to remind me of my call to holiness? Do I realize how much mercy the Lord has already shown me? What is it that I am still withholding from him? Today I will seek a deep conversion of heart in that area where I know I have still been withholding myself from God.

Conversation with Christ:
Lord, thank you for enlightening my conscience with your Gospel. Help me to see where I have become deaf or insensitive to the call of your teachings. I want your grace to triumph in my life. Help me to be brave to change what offends you and to live a life of Christian authenticity.
Resolution:
I will receive the sacrament of reconciliation today and also invite someone else to receive it.