

Persecution, for Heaven's Sake

Daily Gospel and Meditation / Liturgical Cycle A

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Matthew 10:24-33

Jesus said to his Apostles: "No disciple is above his teacher, no slave above his master. It is enough for the disciple that he become like his teacher, for the slave that he become like his master. If they have called the master of the house Beelzebul, how much more those of his household! Therefore do not be afraid of them. Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed, nor secret that will not be known. What I say to you in the darkness, speak in the light; what you hear whispered, proclaim on the housetops. And do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna. Are not two sparrows sold for a small coin? Yet not one of them falls to the ground without your Father's knowledge. Even all the hairs of your head are counted. So do not be afraid; you are worth more than many sparrows. Everyone who acknowledges me before others I will acknowledge before my heavenly Father. But whoever denies me before others, I will deny before my heavenly Father."

Introductory Prayer: Lord, you are the one constant in my life. You are my beginning and my end. I love you as my savior. I trust you as my closest companion. I hope in you as the one who will welcome me into eternal joy.

Petition: Grant me, Lord, the courage to face persecutions, great and small, for the faith.

1. Forewarned is Forearmed: Jesus' opponents called him a devil. Either ignorance or hardness of heart prevented them from seeing the good in Our Lord. Opposition to him continues to this day — only now, we receive the brunt of the attacks. Christ warns that his followers will be reviled, just as he was denounced. Hence, it's no surprise that we are labeled "backward" for our pro-life stance, or "intolerant" because we believe in moral truths. Persecution underscores the authenticity of our faith. If we never face any opposition, we might not be living the faith well enough or publicly enough. How do I handle persecution for my faith?

2. What is True is Always True: Nothing is concealed that will not be revealed. Here, Our Lord assures us that all will be revealed in due time. Lies and fallacies move at the speed of light, thanks to the Internet. Truth seems to travel a lot slower. The problem isn't new. "For the time will come," St. Paul warned in 2 Timothy 4:3-4, "when people will not tolerate sound doctrine but, following their own desires and insatiable curiosity, will accumulate teachers and will stop listening to the truth and will be diverted to myths." Whether it's the truth about marriage or the dignity of the human embryo, the truth will emerge in the public mind, eventually. Likewise, the truth of Christ has to take root in us if we are to have joy and a sense of meaning. The unhappiest moments of life occur when we stray from Christ's path. Which vice most needs to be weeded out of my life?

3. Intolerable Tolerance: If we deny Christ, he will deny us at Judgment Day. That's a sobering thought. So many times the temptation arises to muffle our faith, to give into human respect and keep silent in the face of evil. It can take many forms. We stay mum when a relative brags about moving in with her boyfriend. We say nothing when a fellow Catholic matter-of-factly defends abortion or contraception. Or we as parents fail to intervene when a child spends hours alone on the Internet. All this silence and inaction we chalk up to "tolerance." But Christ didn't tell his disciples to "Go, be tolerant of all things." Rather, he implored: "Go and make disciples of all nations." Have I kept silent about something when I should have spoken up?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, following you isn't easy. Attacks can come on all sides: from family, friends, the media. I almost wish Christianity was easier, but then, it wasn't easy for you, either. So help me avoid complaining. Grant me strength to be daring for you.

Resolution: I will raise a delicate point with someone who needs to hear my Christian witness.