

Gospel text

Matthew 10: 26-33

26 Stop being afraid of those who can harass you. Because there is nothing that one have tried to hide that will not be revealed, and no secrets will not be known. 27 What I told you secretly, say it in the light of day. What your ears have heard, proclaim it from the top of your balconies. 28 Do not be afraid of those who can kill your body, but without being able to kill your inner flame. Instead, beware of who can cause both your inner flame and your body to be thrown in the trash. 29 Are two sparrows not worth more than a penny? Yet none of them will crash into the ground without your Father's knowledge. 30 And you, even all the hair on your head has been inventoried. 31 So stop being afraid. You are more important than sparrows. 32 Whoever takes side with me before others, I too will take side with him before my Father in heaven. 33 But if anyone ever rejects me before others, then I too will reject him before my Father in heaven.

Gospel commentary - Homily

Keep going! Yes you make a difference

I was scared. This is how an old lady in a shelter, single and childless, sums up a life where she spent 48 years as a saleswoman in a bookstore. Imagine for a moment what would have happened if she had dared to express what fascinated her, what she wanted, what interested her, the whims going on in her head. Perhaps she would have become a press secretary for any minister, or director of the National Library, or even a member of the Intelligence and Security Service. And perhaps she would have met a man who would have supported her and with whom she would have had children. We will never know. Fear can unfortunately determine the course of an existence.

Fear seems to play a considerable role in our modern society. September 11, 2001 brought us into a world where the word "terrorism" is on everyone's lips. What is foreign, different or new has become threatening. And lo and behold, Christians find themselves in a world where they are either a minority or marginal considering their values or their concerns. But what applies to the Christian applies to every human being who, in discovering what he really is, meets sarcasm or opposition. It is in this context that I want to read the Gospel of this Sunday.

"Stop being afraid". This is what Jesus repeats. "What you really are, will come out in the open. You'd be better expressing it right away". Then he adds: "Your real enemy is not those who can harass you and cause you physical or financial harm, but they are those who will make sure that you never become what you really are, so much so that you will never express that breath or flame that God has placed in you"; this is how I translate: "whoever takes side with me before others".

Easy to say it all. But how do you find the insurance you need? This is where he adds what is the foundation of our faith: "If God cares about the little sparrows that you find insignificant, if God is able to care about the number of hairs on your head, how much more is he able to be next to you in every second of your life". Jesus could say these things because he himself stopped, filled with emotion, in front of birds chirping around a seed, because he himself took the time observe a face, and that he could understand through his own feelings that God is interested in all of this. And if God is interested in all this, it is sure that he is interested in what I am, in what I have unique, in what I live.

What would we do if we were not afraid of anything? We might say with love and affection certain truths that are difficult to express to people who are cause for concern. We would dare to oppose certain initiatives which we find harmful. We would take the risk of a new career, closer to the skills and desires we carry. We would trust the future and follow our desire to have a child. We would welcome people who belong to a universe that confuses us. Who knows? The list is endless as the range of possibilities for our being.

Today's Gospel is an excerpt from Jesus' speech where he explains what awaits the disciple. Unless you live in certain parts of the world where churches are still being burned, the challenge before us as a Christian is not religious persecution. The challenge is to resist all the ideologies and all the tendencies which refuse the uniqueness of each human being, who want to prevent him from cultivating freely what has been sown in the heart of his being, who mock his sorrow before the misery of others, who ridicule his desire for infinity and his aspirations to find the source of his being.

The final of the Gospel may seem harsh: "if anyone ever rejects me before others, then I too will reject him before my Father in heaven". In fact, the idea could be better rendered like this: "If anyone, because of fear, has refused of becoming the being that he is, I will not be able to back the character that resulted. So let us keep going! Let us not be afraid of the being that we are, of the desires and the thoughts that inhabit us. This is what can make a difference in our world, if we really have faith, if we really believe that God pays attention to what is unique.

-André Gilbert, Gatineau, January 2008