 Reading time: 4 min.

A reflection on Mt 10:26-33

When Jesus extends the invitation to “not be afraid” to his disciples, we must be careful not to reduce this invitation to a superficial slogan. It is a calling, a word spoken by a master to those who have chosen to walk and stay with him. With all their shortcomings, Jesus’ disciples are those who have already left everything to follow him. Jesus is speaking to people who are gradually discovering what friendship with him means, and that he is worth taking seriously. And it is precisely from within this friendship that the command not to be afraid acquires all its weight.

1. **“Do not be afraid”: it is not a choice, but a discovery**

We are tempted to read these words as an appeal to courage that we must summon from deep within ourselves, through willpower or positive thinking. This is not the case.

Jesus’ invitation is not built on human calculations. It is not empty optimism. Jesus sends his disciples as “sheep in the midst of wolves” (Mt 10:16) to face real dangers and opposition. What does it truly mean, then: “Do not be afraid.”

“Not being afraid” is possible only because “something” has happened to those who follow Jesus. A relationship has been formed. A friendship emerges, in the deepest sense of the word, which has taken root deep in the disciple’s heart. Friendship with Jesus is different from any other friendship. In Him and with Him, we discover that we are known and therefore supported. Such a relationship is not a sentimental metaphor. It is the grammar of intimacy.

The absence of fear, therefore, is a discovery that we slowly realise over time, through the practice of staying close to him: in prayer, in listening to his Word, in the sacramental encounter, in service to the poor and to the young. We notice that, bit by bit, what begins as an effort becomes trust. What begins as discipline becomes love. And in that love, fear does not disappear, but it loses its grip. We are no longer slaves, but free because we are embraced by the love of Jesus.

1. **Following Jesus: a journey that enriches our humanity**

Jesus is sending his disciples, but he is not abandoning them. The entire movement of this passage is that of a mission within an accompaniment. He tells them what they will have to face. He tells them who their Father is. He promises his own testimony on their behalf before the Father. In other words, he does not limit himself to giving instructions, but he gives himself.

And this is the heart of the Christian life: not the observance of a code, but the journey of entrusting oneself to a Person. “Following Jesus” is such a familiar phrase that we risk emptying it of its extraordinary nature. Because to follow means to move, to leave the security of what was, and to walk towards what is becoming new: never alone, but with Him, in Him, for Him.

The beauty of this journey is that it does not diminish us, it does not flatten the human person. On the contrary: it is the path of full humanisation. When we entrust ourselves to Jesus, when we dare to abandon ourselves to him, we are like that child who abandons himself in his father’s arms. We find ourselves. We discover a capacity for love, for resilience, for joy, for solidarity that we did not know we had.

This is what the journey of faith teaches us, slowly but with certainty: that we are supported. That our humanity is precious in his eyes. That we are worth more, infinitely more, than we sometimes dare to believe.

And it is from that certainty of being known and loved that we draw the strength to face the challenges of the mission… without fear.

III. Declaring oneself for Jesus: a mature personal identity

“Whoever acknowledges me before men, I will also acknowledge him before my Father in heaven.”

This is the culminating movement of the passage. Let us listen to it carefully because it is easily misunderstood. Declaring oneself for Jesus is not a political act. It is not the adoption of an ideology, a flag to carry, a cause to defend in the public arena. The language of “declaring oneself” might suggest a moment of public

commitment, a sort of strategic positioning. This is not what Jesus asks of us.

When the disciples speak of Jesus in the light of day, when they proclaim from the rooftops what they have heard in the dark, they are not acting. They are simply sharing what they have become. They speak of him because they belong to him. They bear witness because their lives have been shaped by his.

Declaring oneself for Jesus, therefore, means drawing closer to the deepest truth of who one is. It is not a moment of religious enthusiasm or emotional social belonging. It is the recognition, matured through friendship with Jesus, of letting oneself be formed by prayer and surrender. My identity is rooted in my “dwelling” in Christ Jesus.

Conclusion

“Do not be afraid”: not because the world has become safe. Not because the mission is easy. But because we are known, loved, and supported by Christ Jesus. We are accompanied by the one who has counted every hair on our head and calls us by name before the Father.

Let us pray that we may never lack the grace of this freedom, the fruit of our friendship with Jesus.