

WORD FROM THE PASTOR

DO NOT BE AFRAID



"Do not be afraid, little flock!" This is a message we often find throughout the Bible: **"Do not be afraid,"** says God, **"I am with you."** And when Saint Luke wrote his Gospel, he was thinking of persecuted Christians. He realized that everything was going badly and that many were tempted to abandon the faith. So, he reminded them of Jesus' words of old: **"Do not be afraid, little flock!"** This image of the flock is a beautiful symbol. It expresses vigilance, God's love for his people. **Jesus presents Himself to His people in the role of Shepherd.** He is the Good Shepherd who watches over each of His sheep, and **nothing can separate them from His love.**

We know this fear that threatened the first Christians well. We often have many reasons to be afraid. We think of our limitations, our fragility in the face of life's difficulties and harshness. We are aware of our sins. We also know that it is not easy to affirm our faith in a hostile and indifferent world. But the Word of God resounds tirelessly: **"Do not be afraid, I am with you; do not look anxiously at me, for I am your God. (Is 43:1)** As He did for His apostles during a storm on the lake, Jesus calls out to us: **"Take heart! I am here, do not be afraid."** The same Christ reaches out to us in the storms of our lives to reassure us and invite us to move forward. He urges us to cling to Him and follow in His footsteps. This evil that overwhelms us will not have the last word.

The small flock of old has grown, but the Church of Christ remains a small flock, nonetheless. There are many who do not know Jesus and who, too often, do not want Him. **The Lord has not promised success or power to His Church. He simply wants it to be "the Salt of the Earth" and "the leaven in the dough."** Of course, this will only be possible if we are in communion with Him. The salt of the earth and the leaven in the dough are first and foremost Him. If we come to Him, it is to welcome this love that is in Him so that it may transform our lives and those of our world. It is by immersing ourselves in this love that we will become the salt of the earth and the leaven in the dough.

In this Sunday's Gospel, we heard some words that may have surprised us, especially from Jesus: "The servant who, knowing his master's will, yet did not prepare for it or carry out his will, will receive many stripes. But the one who did not know, and who deserved stripes for his conduct, will receive only a few." The danger would be to transpose these words into the register of the law. It is essential to keep our eyes fixed on the Lord. He is the only treasure of our hearts. Let us pray to Him together, in communion with one another: may He grant us to remain **"in service attire"** without fearing this world into which **He sends us; may He keep our lamps burning, the lamp of faith, the lamp of prayer, the lamp of love.** Let us ask the Lord to give us a future of joy and light with you. Keep us vigilant in hope, open and welcoming to the signs of the Holy Spirit.

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