

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Mar 4th 2024

How do you live as a Christian and not be persecuted?

What annoyed the assembly in Nazareth were the words of 'grace' of Jesus. And the villagers – their village heads - expelled Jesus from their village. The term 'village' in the Gospels always had a negative connotation. The village people remained closed-minded, attached to their traditions, not wanting to change and resistant.

That's why when Mark narrates Jesus healing the deaf and dumb man in 7:31, Jesus took him away from the crowd. To open his ears to help him listen to something completely different and to help him to speak in a new way, it was necessary to take him away from the noise of the crowd. And when Jesus cured the blind man from Bethsaida in Mark 8:22, he repeated the action: taking him out of town and helping him see the world differently. After healing him, Jesus told him not to return to the village. If you return to your old ways, you return to your blindness.

Jesus and his message were rejected because the people could not take criticism. As announcers of the Gospel, if what happened to Jesus does not happen to us, we should ask ourselves: Did I preach the authentic Gospel, or did I say what people desired to hear from me? Sometimes it is misunderstood that a capable evangeliser does not provoke, does not disturb, always says only what people like to hear, and does things in the way that has always been done...

But, the aim of an evangeliser is not to please people, nor to speak what people expect him to speak, but to spread the Word of Christ. Do we experience resistance to changing certain traditions that have little or nothing to do with faith? In our church communities, that is what people love to observe and practice. That is why we come across some very virtuous Catholics but reject Pope Francis' teachings and life as heretical.

Jesus did not dilute his message to win sympathy in his hometown. The Gospel must be announced in its authenticity. It can be received or rejected but not modified.

One day two bishops met. One of them worked in a place where Christians were persecuted, and his colleague asked him: How do you live as a Christian in a place where you are persecuted? The bishop was a little pensive and then turned to his colleague and said: 'What I do not understand is, how you manage to live as a Christian without being persecuted?'

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