

Monday's Gospel: The Remedy is to Look at Christ

Gospel for Monday in the 19th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 17:22-27*)

As they were gathering in Galilee, Jesus said to them, “The Son of man is to be delivered into the hands of men, and they will kill him, and he will be raised on the third day.” And they were greatly distressed.

When they came to Capernaum, the collectors of the half-shekel tax went up to Peter and said, “Does not your

teacher pay the tax?” He said, “Yes.” And when he came home, Jesus spoke to him first, saying, “What do you think, Simon? From whom do kings of the earth take toll or tribute? From their sons or from others?” And when he said, “From others,” Jesus said to him, “Then the sons are free. However, not to give offense to them, go to the sea and cast a hook, and take the first fish that comes up, and when you open its mouth you will find a shekel; take that and give it to them for me and for yourself.”

Commentary

The Gospel today begins with the announcement of Christ's future passion, death and resurrection, and ends by showing Jesus working a small miracle.

This is the second announcement of his passion, death and resurrection, which deeply saddens his disciples. Suffering is one of the most common experiences in life. Often we find ourselves suffering deeply for reasons we never expected. Like the disciples, we too can become discouraged in our daily lives because of the Cross: because of an injustice, because of something that doesn't turn out as we hoped, because of an unexpected difficulty. Saint Josemaría assures us: “If you realize that those sufferings – of body or soul – mean purification and merit, bless them” (*The Way*, 219).

The Gospel passage continues with someone asking the disciples about whether they pay the Temple tax. We know that many of the Temple priests in Jesus' time were exempt from paying this tax. Jesus is the Son of God and Lord of the Temple; therefore he has more reasons than

anyone not to pay it. Nevertheless our Lord tells Peter to pay the tax “so as not to give offense.” He pays a shekel, which was worth four denarii. The tax owed to the Temple was two denarii per person; therefore this is the exact amount Peter and Jesus should pay. By the small miracle that he works, our Lord invites us to fulfill our social duties and not make use of special privileges to exempt ourselves.

The two events we see today are linked. Our Lord will have to suffer, but we also see God’s power to overcome all difficulties. The teaching is clear. In our lives too we will have to suffer at times, but if we put our trust in our Lord, he will always come to our assistance. Saint Josemaría assured us: “When faced with the reality of suffering, if you ever sense that your soul is wavering, the remedy is to look at Christ” (*Christ is Passing By*, no. 168).

No matter what we may encounter in our life, let us always place our trust in our Lord.

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