

Saturday's Gospel: Losing Everything for Love

Gospel for Saturday in the 17th
Week of Ordinary Time, and
commentary.

Gospel (*Mt 14:1-12*)

At that time Herod the tetrarch heard about the fame of Jesus; and he said to his servants, “This is John the Baptist, he has been raised from the dead; that is why these powers are at work in him.” For Herod had seized John and bound him and put him in prison, for the sake of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife; because John said to him, “It is not lawful for you

to have her.” And though he wanted to put him to death, he feared the people, because they held him to be a prophet. But when Herod’s birthday came, the daughter of Herodias danced before the company, and pleased Herod, so that he promised with an oath to give her whatever she might ask. Prompted by her mother, she said, “Give me the head of John the Baptist here on a platter.” And the king was sorry; but because of his oaths and his guests he commanded it to be given; he sent and had John beheaded in the prison, and his head was brought on a platter and given to the girl, and she brought it to her mother. And his disciples came and took the body and buried it; and they went and told Jesus.

Commentary

Jesus receives from his disciples the news of John the Baptist's death. They know how much Jesus loved him and are eager to let him know what has happened, perhaps also to find comfort themselves.

How much sorrow would have been in Jesus' heart as he listened to the story of the death of his relative and friend! With what tenderness he would have consoled the troubled hearts of his disciples, such good friends of John! How much he would have tried to encourage them by speaking about the great soul of the Baptist, ready to give his life for Jesus!

The defense of the truth, the truth that sets us free, that is non-negotiable and the enemy of false compromises, leads us to be ready to give our lives for Jesus.

John's words enlightened the men and women of his time, even Herod

himself. They moved hearts deeply, and sowed the seeds of truth, justice, love. They were words capable of stirring up the goodness that, although often buried under a mountain of lies, is found deep in the heart of every person.

Herod had been sliding down the path of no return, condemning himself to a sterile, unhappy life, closed in on himself, in the prison of his own selfishness. John's words reach his heart, trying to free him from the prison Herod has created for himself.

John wants to show, with his own life, that true, deep and fruitful love is ready to give itself completely, even losing one's own life for the people one loves.

It is the "restlessness of love" that seeks "always, without rest, the good of the other, of the person one loves, with an intensity that even leads to

tears”; that “urges one to go out to meet the other person, without waiting for them to express their need.”^[1]

With our attentive love, expressed in specific deeds, loving with the Heart of Christ, we show others what God's love for them is like, what the deepest truth of their own being is: that they are beloved children of God the Father. We should never be afraid to give our lives in expressing this love.

^[1] Francis, Homily, 28 August 2013.

Luis Cruz