



Be of good cheer; I have overcome the world

Fr. Luke Sidarous

“When Christ, to whom is due glory, sent His disciples to the world—and after them His children in every generation—He revealed to them all that was to come.

Of course, the future is laid bare before Him, for there is no past nor future with God, and He sees all things His children will face. So, He began to describe what the faithful—those who bear Christ in them—would face in very great detail: troubles, persecution, hardship; the world rejecting His children; hatred; suffering. He even told His pure disciples, “And you will be hated by all for My name's sake.”¹

There will come an hour, “that whoever kills you will think that he offers God service.”²

‘The devil will distort their minds to make them believe they are doing God a service, so they do it with power and cruelty. They will put you before rulers and in prison; even worse, sons will deliver their fathers and fathers will deliver their children.’

So, if the future holds troublesome and terrifying events, what should I do?

Christ tells us to look at the end of all things, “In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.”³

Be confident. Take the student whose teacher tells them their exam will be extremely difficult, and the student asks the teacher how they can pass. The teacher tells the student, ‘If you sit the exam you will succeed; there is your result!’ Very comforting.

When the soldiers came to lay hands on Christ, none of the disciples were harmed or even touched; He bore everything. Then when He filled them with the Holy Spirit and gave them Himself to abide with and within, He commanded them to preach to all the world. ‘The world will be difficult, but I have overcome the world. They will deliver you to death, but I have overcome death. They will deliver you to suffering, but I have overcome suffering. You will have hardships and tribulation, but I have overcome those too. I will give you comfort and My peace. They will bind you and shackle you, but I give freedom.’

¹ Matthew 10:22

² John 16:2

³ John 16:33

That is why I tell you, you are in a war against a world that is already defeated and weakened.

In Christ, God's children defeat death.

Fr. Bishoy Kamel said, "I do not fear death" on his deathbed. Literally—in practice, not in sermons. When someone says this on their deathbed, it is the truth.

Christ gave us this grace and revealed everything to us; do not be afraid. Even in our spiritual struggle He said, "Strive to enter through the narrow gate."⁴

The narrow gate is carrying out the commandments, offering love, keeping yourself holy. This is the narrow gate that will lead to the kingdom of heaven.

"...narrow is the gate and difficult is the way which leads to life..."⁵

If you mollycoddle, you will not enter; if you live it, you will overcome.

So, when He revealed everything we would face in this world, He said, 'You will overcome the world.'

About persecution, He said:

"Blessed are you when they revile and persecute you, and say all kinds of evil against you falsely for My sake.

Rejoice and be exceedingly glad, for great is your reward in heaven...

"You are the salt of the earth..."

"You are the light of the world..."⁶

That is why the faithful will face many tribulations and will overcome in Christ. Even in your daily life, carry out the commandment of Christ with patience; how easy it will be to escape tribulation and family difficulties through patience and longsuffering. Because at the centre of these difficulties lies the way to our salvation. Patience, longsuffering, gentleness.

It is said that a man had a chronic disease, a prolonged illness, along with other diseases. He was longsuffering, but always thankful.

One of the priests usually prayed over water for the healing of disease. The sick person's friends took him to this priest. When the priest asked the sick man what was wrong with him, the sick man answered, 'There is nothing wrong with me, thank God.' So the priest let him go. But those friends badgered the sick person, 'When the priest asked you about your illness, why did not you tell him?'

He replied, 'This is my cross and I am carrying it. I did not ask or beg anyone to remove it. I know the value of this hardship Christ permitted me to go through; this is my reward and my crown.'

⁴ Luke 13:24

⁵ Matthew 7:14

⁶ Matthew 5: 11-14

Those who understood Christ's words, who hold onto Christ, say, 'We rejoice in insults and tribulation, in need, weakness, and pain.'

"Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ's sake. For when I am weak, then I am strong."⁷

Life in Christ is beautiful; it changes each terrifying event to joy, because through these things the cross is formed. We kiss the cross, we honour the cross, and venerate the cross; we love the cross. So when we face the cross in life, we carry the cross and do not complain because the cross is a reason for joy.

God plans your life, and everything you face is accounted for; hardships are not a burden God lays upon you.

Forty years ago, before my ordination, one of the fathers asked me, "If you go to a tailor to make you a jacket, would he make the sleeves a foot longer than your arms?"

I replied, "That's impossible; the tailor will tailor the jacket to my measurements."

Then the father said, "Isn't God wiser than the tailor? Is it possible for God to burden you beyond your ability? This situation calls for acceptance, obedience, and thanksgiving."

Say, 'Lord, I thank You for the burden You have given me, because You have measured me and know my limits, and created me and know my inner being. So, I thank You for all You have given me, because it is tailored for me.'

"...but God is faithful, who will not allow you to be tempted beyond what you are able, but with the temptation will also make the way of escape, that you may be able to bear it."⁸

Glory be to God. Amen."

⁷ 2 Corinthians 12:10

⁸ 1 Corinthians 10:13