

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, May 6th 2016

If I were singing Mass today, I would sing “Be Not Afraid.” I’m singing it right now. It might be the only song I sang at Mass, splitting out the verses for Entrance, Communion, and Closing. It’s one of my favorite songs, and it fits so well with both the readings today.

Paul has a vision and is encouraged to continue to speak out, even though this was potentially dangerous. He was told, “Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you.” And Paul does continue to speak despite the danger. He is brought to the tribunal for speaking against the law, but the proconsul will not hear the complaint against him. The song says, “You shall speak your words in foreign lands and all will understand.” The Lord had promised Paul that he would be protected and that there were friends in Corinth. The song says, “Be not afraid, I go before you always.” If Paul was afraid, his fears were for naught. The Lord went before him and protected him. Paul was speaking and teaching the truth and was protected from trial and persecution.

The Gospel is a little more complicated. The song says, “Blessed are you that weep and mourn, for one day you shall laugh.” And Jesus tells his disciples, “Amen, I say to you, you will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices; you will grieve, but your grief will become joy.” There is grief and sorrow. There is at least at first maybe reason to fear. But in the end, there is joy. Like the mother who suffers the pain of childbirth forgets the pain in the joy of her child, the disciples will forget their pain at the loss of Jesus when they are reunited with him. He returns briefly to the world, but he goes before them to heaven where they will be reunited for eternity. He goes before us always to prepare the way for us. There are many separations in this world that make us weep and mourn. There are things here that are frightening. But our faith in the Lord will protect us in the long run. When we see the Lord, our pain will be forgotten and we will rejoice and no one can take that joy from us.

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