

The Gospel today is sober.

Christ begins speaking not about comfort, but about conflict.

“They will do these things because they have not known the Father, nor me.”

The Church is still close to Pentecost.

The Resurrection is still fresh.

And already Christ is warning His apostles:

The world will resist you.

Not because the apostles are harsh.

Not because truth is cruel.

But because fallen humanity resists the light.

That has always been the battle.

And yet before Christ speaks about persecution, He speaks about the Holy Spirit.

“When the Advocate comes... he will bear witness about me. And you also are witnesses.”

That order matters.

The Holy Spirit first.

Then the apostles.

The Church does not invent her own message.

She receives it.

The Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ—and the Church bears witness because she has first received that witness herself.

That is why the Catholic Faith is not self-created religion.

The Church hands on what she has received.

Nothing more.

Nothing less.

And then we see this in the first reading in a beautiful and quiet way.

Paul arrives in Philippi.

No dramatic entrance.

No crowds waiting.

He goes outside the city to a place of prayer beside the river.

And there he meets Lydia.

A woman listening.

And then comes one of the most important lines in the whole reading:

“The Lord opened her heart.”

Not Paul alone.

Not argument alone.

The Lord.

Grace again.

Always grace first.

Lydia listens—but more importantly, God acts.

Because conversion is not simply persuasion.

It is divine action in the soul.

A heart closed by sin, fear, pride, or worldliness is opened by grace.

And when that happens, everything changes.

Then Lydia is baptised.

Not only her—but her household.

And immediately her life changes shape.

Her home becomes a place of welcome for the Church.

That is always the mark of real conversion.

Grace does not remain hidden inside.

It begins reshaping ordinary life.

Homes change.

Priorities change.

The heart changes.

Now place the Gospel beside this.

Christ says the world will oppose the truth.

Acts shows the truth quietly entering the world anyway.

One soul at a time.

One household at a time.

That is how the Kingdom grows.

Not always through spectacle.

Often silently.

Like grace entering Lydia's heart beside a river.

And this should give us both seriousness and hope.

Seriousness—because Christ does not hide the reality of opposition.

A Catholic cannot expect to follow Christ faithfully and never feel tension with the world.

Truth unsettles.

Holiness unsettles.

A life centred on God exposes how shallow much of the world has become.

But there is hope too.

Because conversion is not finally our work.

The Lord opens hearts. Not us. That matters enormously.

Because sometimes we become discouraged.

We pray for people.

We speak about the Faith.

We try to witness well.

And nothing seems to change.

But today's reading reminds us:

Grace works invisibly before it works visibly.

The Lord is capable of opening hearts we thought would never change.

And perhaps the deepest point today is this:

The Holy Spirit bears witness to Christ before the world ever listens to the Church.

The Church does not create Christ believable.

Christ reveals Himself through the Spirit.

And therefore the Church must remain faithful—not clever.

Faithful.

That is the temptation in every age:

To soften the Faith so the world approves.

To hide difficult truths.

To make the Gospel less demanding.

To become acceptable.

But Christ never told the apostles to become acceptable.

He told them to become witnesses.

And witnesses do not alter what they have seen.

This is why the saints have such power.

Not because they were fashionable.

Because they were transparent to Christ.

The Holy Spirit bore witness through them.

And this returns us finally to Lydia.

A quiet woman beside a river.

No miracle described.

No dramatic scene.

And yet eternity enters her life.

Because the Lord opened her heart.

Perhaps that is the line many souls need most today.

Because there are hearts that have slowly closed.

Through disappointment.

Sin.

Distraction.

Pride.

Worldliness.

And perhaps outwardly life continues normally—

but interiorly the heart has narrowed.

Today the Church quietly asks: Will you allow the Lord to open your heart again?

To truth. To grace. To deeper conversion.

Because Pentecost is approaching.

And the Holy Spirit does not descend upon closed hearts.

Only upon hearts willing to receive Him.

So remain faithful. Bear witness without fear.

Do not become discouraged by the resistance of the world.

And pray for the grace Lydia received:

That the Lord Himself may open the heart—because once He does,
everything begins to change.