

Paul arrives in Corinth exhausted.

He has been mocked in Athens.

Driven from cities.

Opposed repeatedly.

And Corinth is not an easy place.

A wealthy city.

A corrupt city.

A city full of immorality, noise, trade, pagan worship.

And somewhere beneath the surface of today's reading, you can sense something in Paul:

Fear.

Because the Lord suddenly appears to him in the night and says:

“Do not be afraid.”

Christ does not say that unless fear is already there.

That matters.

Because we often imagine the saints as untouched by weakness.

But Paul knew exhaustion.

Discouragement.

Loneliness.

He knew what it was to keep preaching while opposition grew around him.

And into that weariness Christ speaks:

“Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Do not be silent.”

Why?

“For I am with you.”

That is always the centre.

Not Paul's strength. Christ's presence.

And then comes a remarkable line:

“I have many people in this city.”

Before they are converted.

Before they believe.

Before Paul even knows who they are.

Christ already sees them.

Grace is already moving invisibly.

That is one of the deepest consolations in the spiritual life.

God is working long before we see results.

Then the Gospel opens the mystery even further.

“You will weep and mourn, while the world rejoices.”

Christ does not hide reality.

The Church will suffer in the world.

The faithful will often appear weak while evil appears strong.

Goodness can look defeated.

Truth can look outnumbered.

And the world rejoices quickly whenever holiness is mocked or weakened.

But Christ immediately says something extraordinary:

“Your sorrow will turn into joy.”

Not replaced by joy.

Turned into joy.

Transformed.

That is the mystery of Easter itself.

The Cross does not disappear.

It becomes resurrection.

And then Christ gives the image of a woman in labour.

Pain that feels overwhelming.

And yet pain bringing forth life.

That is how the Church lives in history.

The world sees suffering and thinks only of defeat.

But God brings life out of what appears barren.

The martyrs die—and the Church grows.

The saints suffer—and souls are converted.

Christ is crucified—and death itself is broken.

That is why Christian hope is not optimism.

Optimism depends on circumstances.

Hope depends on Christ.

And Christ has already conquered death.

Now place the readings together.

Paul stands in a hostile city tempted toward fear.

The apostles hear Christ speaking of sorrow.

And both readings reveal the same truth:

The Gospel advances through endurance.

Not worldly power.

Not popularity.

Faithfulness.

And perhaps this is important now.

Because many Catholics feel discouraged.

The culture grows darker.

Faith grows weaker.

Churches empty.

Truth is resisted openly.

And there is a temptation toward silence.

Toward discouragement.

Toward thinking the battle is already lost.

But Christ says the same thing now that He said to Paul:

“Do not be afraid. Keep on speaking. Do not be silent.”

Why?

Because Christ still has people in the city.

Still touching hearts.

Still calling souls.

Still drawing sinners back.

Grace is still moving quietly beneath the surface of the world.

And this also means something personal.

Some souls here may feel tired spiritually.

Praying without consolation.

Trying to remain faithful quietly.

Carrying burdens unnoticed.

And perhaps wondering whether any of it matters.

Today Christ answers: I am with you.

Not: “I was.”

Not: “I will be eventually.”

I am with you.

That is the strength of the saints.

Not that suffering disappears.

But that Christ remains present within it.

Especially in the Eucharist.

Because there the sorrow of Calvary has already become resurrection.

The sacrifice remains—but transformed into glory.

And that is where the Gospel leads finally:

“No one will take your joy from you.”

The world can take many things.

Health.

Reputation.

Comfort.

Even life itself.

But it cannot take the joy rooted in the risen Christ.

Because that joy does not come from circumstances.

It comes from communion with Him.

So tonight the Church speaks with realism and hope together.

Yes, there is sorrow.

Yes, there is struggle.

Yes, the world often seems to rejoice while truth suffers.

But Easter has already happened.

The tomb is empty.

And because Christ lives—sorrow does not have the final word.