

# Reflection On The Sunday Gospel: 33rd Sunday Ordinary Time

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Today I'm going to reflect on the 2nd half of the Gospel for the 33rd Sunday of Ordinary Time, Luke 21. 5-19

In today's Gospel Jesus foresees the opposition which we, His followers, will face. So, like a great general leading his troupes into battle, He sets out to give us encouragement and strengthen our resolve to stand firm.

First, he foretells the kind of dangers that lie ahead. Christ's followers would be persecuted, just as He was. They would be driven from the synagogues for preaching in the name of Jesus. They would be arraigned in both pagan and Jewish courts. So great would be the opposition to the followers of Jesus that it would split families. In fact, all this has proved to be true throughout the history of the Church.

Since we could easily become discouraged after these dire warnings, Jesus then reassures. Opposition to our faith can provide us with the

opportunity of explaining and defending it. That was certainly true when the apostles were brought before the courts. Less dramatically, that can be true for us whenever someone challenges our faith and Christian way of life, or simply wants to know more about what we believe.

But that in itself may be daunting. We may well fear that we won't be up to explaining our faith. We may fear that we don't have sufficient understanding and eloquence. That's the fear of most preachers and, I expect, teachers and parents. It's a healthy attitude, which prevents us becoming conceited or complacent - providing it doesn't become paralysing.

So Jesus reassures us for when we are called to witness to Him. Instead of relying on our human powers of persuasion we should trust in the help He gives us in spreading the Good News. When the risen Lord commissioned the apostles to preach the Good News to the whole world He promised to be with us always. And Before His Passion He promised to send us the Spirit of truth, who would remind us of all that He had taught us.

In other words, God commits Himself to helping us when He calls us to do His work. That Spirit is at work both in us in sharing the Good News, and also in those who hear it. The word of God itself is, indeed, alive and active. Thank God the outcome of our labours does not depend upon our feeble human efforts alone!

But we do have to play our part, as the Spirit assists us by helping to draw upon the faith, which we have come to know and love through years of prayerful reflection.

Today's Gospel ends on an up-beat note. When Jesus finally comes in glory He will welcome into His kingdom all who have stood by Him, especially when our faith has been severely tested. Even if our bodies have been destroyed through martyrdom they will be renewed and glorified in the resurrection. That, I think, is what Jesus implies here when He says that not a hair of our heads will be destroyed.

So, the message of today's Gospel is that we must expect it to be difficult and even dangerous following Christ. But it's well worthwhile standing firmly by Him, knowing that He will always stand by us!