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Mgr Nicodème Barrigah

"If you do not believe, you cannot hold." It is with these words that the prophet Isaiah concludes the message that the Lord had charged him with delivering to King Ahaz. The context, it is important to remember, was particularly concerning. Before the double attack launched by the kings of Aram and Israel, all seemed lost in advance. Profoundly shaken and troubled, King Ahaz's heart had already surrendered to his enemies. In comparing himself to the two great kingdoms that wanted to make short work of him, Juda was painfully aware of not measuring up. But that was merely an appearance, as it did not take into account the intervention of God. This is why Isaiah declares to King Ahaz, with a bit of humor, "keep calm, do not be afraid, do not lose heart before these two bits of smoking embers, because of the burning anger of the king of Aram and the king of Israel." And he notes that the primary weapon of the people of Judah is their unwavering faith in the love of God. Saint John will later say in his First Letter 5,4: "The victory that conquers the world is our faith." In other words, it is through our faith that we are victors.

Today, looking at the large threats that weigh on the world, and in particular on the family, we feel a real distress. Indeed, everything seems to be designed to destroy the family and we are justly worried about that. Let us therefore let the promise of the prophet Isaiah to King Ahaz resonate in us. God is there at the heart of our history and our battles. He will not let his people be crushed, as long as they remain confident and do not lose hope. No! It is not in looking for compromise with the world that we will save the family, but in maintaining confidence in the Lord, listening to His word, and remaining faithful to His will. And so, we must turn back to our own relationship with the Lord, in order to measure the strength of our faith. If we do not believe, we cannot hold. This is a blunt admonishment: if we rely solely on human means, we will not weigh up to our adversaries. It is thanks to this faith that we can exclaim with Psalm 48: See! The kings assembled, together they advanced. When they looked, they were astounded; terrified, they were put to flight."

But how can we achieve this unwavering faith? The Gospel passage that we just heard can help us answer this fundamental question. Jesus bemoans the inhabitants of Capernaum, Corozain, Bethsaida who, despite the miracles accomplished in their midst and the predictions that they had heard, would not receive his salvific message, simply because they had not seen in him the Messiah, the Son of God.

There are two ways to know Christ: in the body and in the Spirit (2 Corinthians 5,16). We know Christ according to the body when we look at him with an overly human approach. On the other hand, we know Christ according to the Spirit when we go beyond appearances to know his true identity as the Son of God. These two ways of knowing also apply to the Church, to the Successor of Peter, the Pope, as well as to the College of Bishops.

It happens sometimes that we pay too much attention to the human aspects of their person and their ministry. The Lord invites us today to go beyond appearances to see in them His messengers, the pastors He gave to us.



Lord, reinforce our faith, our confidence in you. May we be thankful to you for your work today, through the Church which faces serious threats. May we, by our faith become victorious with You over the world.

Amen.

