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Concio XCIV

Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom.

Luke 12:32, KJV

Once we contemplate the countless obstacles and difficulties of this world, no wonder people, without encouragement and consoling, feel at a loss for how not to grow doubtful or how not to lose their way in the midst of such adversity. Troubles and tribulations are greatest for those who want to follow God's command and live by His laws and statutes. How true are the words of our Lord Christ (John 15:19): “If you belonged to the world, the world would love you as its own. Because you do not belong to the world, but I have chosen you out of the world—therefore the world hates you.” For that reason, it is important that we support and strengthen these followers, so they won't waver amidst these many temptations and they won't forget about praising the glory of this world.

Before his death, our Lord Christ wanted to release the Apostles to spread the Gospels. At that time, he spoke to them teachings and admonishments to encourage them and to reassure them about the care and providence of the Holy Father, even in the face of adversities and hostilities.

Our main Bible verse has two parts: the first part is about encouragement; the second part is about comforting, the reasoning behind the encouragement. If we want to understand the meaning of these words (Luke 12:32): “Fear not, little flock, for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom,” we have to examine them closer.

In those words, our Lord Christ describes two attributes of worshippers and followers of God. The first is they are fearful as they follow their faith. The other is they are a small group, few in number.

As the life stories of prophets and saints demonstrate, it was dangerous and frightening to believe in the truth from the very beginning. Similarly, during the time of the New Testament, Nicodemus didn't dare to visit Jesus during the day. In John 12 (John 12:42), we see that: “Nevertheless even among the rulers, many believed in Him, but because of the Pharisees they did not confess *Him*, lest they should be put out of the

synagogue.” Even after the resurrection of Jesus, the Apostles were forced to stay in the same house because they feared the Jews, as John the Baptist stated (John 20:19). All these fears were to benefit the faithful not to harm them. That’s because by our human nature we become sluggish, careless, and forgetful when we have no fear. Let us remember what Solomon said (Proverbs 30:8-9): “Give me no riches, lest I be full and deny thee.”

He allows the faithful to live amid fear and trepidation because He wants them to be careful, industrious, and of sound mind. Have you seen that those who are terrified and frightened cannot ever go to sleep because all they are thinking of is their own survival? Our Almighty God wants something different as He wants His children to depend on him and to consult with Him when they are suffering. This way, they are not inclined to seek remedy in this mortal world, but they turn to Him instead. Take the example of clever fathers who maintain respect and deference from their children by not providing them all they need but letting them live through hardships. Amidst their adversities, those children will come to their fathers to ask questions and consult them, and so the fathers keep the reins in hand.

On the other hand, those unwise fathers and mothers who place into the hands of their children everything they have will not be respected and honored because those children who demand and expect livestock and property will no longer depend on the parents and will neglect them.

Correspondingly, if the faithful receive everything they wish for, and God pours His grace onto them all at once, they would forget their Father and turn toward the riches of the secular world. In order to avoid such a turn of events, our Lord God wants them to live in want and to be in need without His actions.

The third good reason for the faithful to remain frightened is because it is a trial to tell apart the good from the wicked and the truthful from the pretenders. When we enjoy good fortune, everyone cherishes and obeys the truth, and nobody can tell apart the steadfast faithful from the pretenders. But when the times are frightening, we then find out who will hold their ground in faith. The faithful will do that. Now, people are fallible and being frightened can make them deny the truth. We can observe this through the example of St. Peter who not only denied the truth, our Lord Christ, in front of a woman, but even after the ascendance of Christ, as Paul writes (Gal 2:12): “While Peter was waiting for his countrymen, he would eat with the Gentiles, but when his countrymen arrived, he separated himself from the Gentiles saying that he was afraid of the circumcision group.” Consequently, when people deny the truth because they are fearful, they need someone to encourage and comfort them. Our Lord says (Luke 12:32), “Fear not” to convey that while you might live in fearful times and among enemies, you still ought to keep up your courage. There is no conflict between the concepts of people living in dreadful times in frightening places but still having no fear, only trust and courage in their hearts. Moreover, a wise man said that those men who

are brave, not fearful, in a frightening place are worthless men. Our Lord God wants His people to be fearful but aspires them to have courage.

Let us conclude from this that no one should refrain from affirming the truth just because they must be fearful. First, it is to benefit them, and then, the God who wanted them to be fearful also gives them comfort and courage in their hearts. So much so, they can ignore the wars and the chaos of the world and maintain tranquility in their heart as they remember that their powerful guardian and almighty defender exclaims (Luke 12:32): “Fear not.” He was telling Abraham the same in Genesis 15 (Genesis 15:1): “Do not be afraid, Abram, I am your shield; your reward shall be very great.”

In Luke 12:32, He says: “Fear not little flock.” If we consider history from the creation of the world to our current time, we can clearly see that God’s followers were fewer in number than the sons of Belial; the righteous people were fewer in number than the wicked; the pious people were fewer in number than the villains. Also, at the beginning of the world, there were four people, but only one was innocent, Abel. Cain was wicked, and Adam and Eve disobeyed God’s command. After that, we could only find Noah in the entire world. After the great flood, only Abraham was true on the entire planet. In Sodom, only Lot was true. Even if I don’t list more examples from the Old Testament, we can easily make an enumeration from the writings of the Evangelists who were the true Sons of God and the true God-fearing people at the time of our Lord Christ.

No wonder he calls His followers “little flock.” Why do Catholics brag about their denomination by calling it *catholica*, meaning it is established and recognized throughout the world? Even in the days of the prophet Elijah, the priests of Baal numbered four hundred and fifty (1 Kings 18:22), but there was just one prophet of God, Elijah. The false prophets who prophesized lies for Ahab (1 Kings 22:16) numbered four hundred, while there was only one truth-telling prophet, Micaiah. Thus, a large number of followers doesn’t make a faith true, and a small number of followers doesn’t make a faith false. A further example of this, from earlier books of the Bible, is when the angel tells Esdras: “The most High had made this world for many, but the world to come for few . . . There be many created, but few shall be saved.” (2 Esd 8:1,3). Our Lord Christ said this in Luke 13:24 when asked if only a few would be saved: “Strive to enter through the narrow door,” and also in Matthew 7:13: “Enter through the narrow gate; for the gate is wide and the road is easy that leads to destruction, and there are many who take it. For the gate is narrow and the road is hard that leads to life, and there are few who find it.”

Another thing we need to remember here is that God’s followers might be fewer compared to the numbers of the wicked—but not as few as most people would imagine. Humans know only what they perceive around them, but God examines and observes what’s in the heart. That’s why the Apostle says (2 Tim 2:19): “The Lord knows those who are his.” It’s not only the unfaithful, but even true people may not recognize others who are also true. A good example is Prophet Elijah, who thought and said that besides him there were no more faithful. But the Lord told him (1 Kings 19:18): “I will leave

seven thousand in Israel, all the knees have not bowed to Baal, and every mouth have not kissed him.”

Let us conclude from this it is a false and shameful argument to say that our faith, “God is one,” cannot be true because we are few in number. Their arguments also say our religion is a brand new faith. It is a brand new faith only if the Bible is a brand new book. In the entire world, there is no older book than the Bible, and our religion is written right in there. Their religion started only after the birth of Christ. We can tell when each book was written. We can tell when their council created the Trinity, when they introduced the baptism of small children, when they allowed idols into the church, and other similarly blasphemous transgressions. However, our faith is twice as old as the time that has passed since the birth of our Lord Christ.

How can they call something new when it started with the creation of this world? Theirs is the newer faith compared to us because the popes in Rome crafted it very recently. Just as we are strong and true, there are few of us in our religion. We admit that we are fewer in number than they are, as there is much weed and dust around, but little gold. The wise revere what’s rare and uncommon and not what is usual and commonplace. Pebbles are abundant, but diamonds are rare. However, we are not as few in numbers as they believe and assert. This country of ours is a small sliver of land, and, praise the name of the Lord, we not only have twenty-five people here, but a lot more than twenty-five, even if we consider only the teachers. One of them, who is credible and has an honorable reputation and couldn’t be here with us because of the long distance and the treacherous nature of our times, said in front of the congregation that in just one corner of our country there are sixty-two preachers who agree with us in our faith of one living God and His Holy Son, who preach and proclaim that God is one. There also the ones, like Nicodemus, who adhere to the truth, but we know about only a few— there are others we don’t yet know. Then there are those who are waiting for just the right circumstance or the call from the Lord. In summary, our numbers are not as low as our adversaries would have you believe.

In any case, our number might be somewhat fewer, but that doesn’t justify calling our faith untrue. As our Lord Christ has said in our quote (Luke 12:32): “Fear not, little flock.”

Let us conclude then that while the entire world may believe our church has no superintendent and our flock has no shepherd, we do indeed have our God to look after us. As King David said (Psalms 121:4): “He who keeps Israel neither slumbers nor sleeps.” Who would be those true Israelites? St. Paul says the true Israelites are not the children of the flesh of Jacob, but those who became His children through faith (Romans 9:6-8). Our Lord Christ says that he is a good shepherd, not like a hired hand who runs away when he sees a wolf coming (John 10:1-16). Indeed, there is a shepherd for this little flock. While the sizable Catholic church may flaunt that they have a priest in Rome wearing a three-crowned tiara, we can confidentially say that our small church has a shepherd who keeps us and watched over us, even though we don’t have among us mortal rulers or the Caiphases of souls. This is the first part of these words of

God that teach us that God's followers have two characteristics: they are frightened, and they are few in number.

However, we ought not be cowering because of fear, but we ought to be encouraged, as the second part of his sentence says (Luke 12:32): "for it is your Father's good pleasure to give you the kingdom."

When we talk to people who are frail or impoverished, we may say words of encouragement or consoling, such as "It will pass soon," or "It will last for a short time," or "Others are suffering even more." However, there are no words more powerful than saying their hardship leads to a tremendous glory and joyful reward. Our Lord Christ comforts us as well, as he comforted the Apostles (John 16:21): "When a woman is in labor, she has pain, because her hour has come. But when her child is born, she no longer remembers the anguish because of the joy of having brought a human being into the world." Christ is encouraging the Apostles in Matthew 5 as well, by saying there will be plentiful rewards and remittances for their frightening and impoverished existence. And once they receive those rewards and remittances, they will forget about their pain and rejoice, despite their previous perils (Matthew 5:11): "Blessed are you when people revile you and persecute you and utter all kinds of evil against you falsely on my account. Rejoice and be glad, for your reward is great in heaven, for in the same way they persecuted the prophets who were before you."

Another part of the sentence from Luke 12:32 is "It's your Father good pleasure." In other words, it is His wish and will. That is the meaning of this Greek word "Εὐδοκίᾳ" in this verse. Each verse has meaning behind it. Here, the meaning is that eternal life and the rewards for virtuous actions come from the benevolence and free will of God, and not because we are entitled to it. First of all, how could we be entitled to anything when we are filled with wickedness, willing to commit transgressions, and haven't accomplished anything to perfection? Is there anyone who doesn't have some imperfections? Sometimes we act virtuously without feeling delighted, or we brag about it, or we torment ourselves with unclean thoughts. Are we entitled to perfect glory for all such things? Second, are we performing enough good deeds for God, to whom we ought to be grateful? Listen to what He told King David (Psalms 50:10): "For every wild animal of the forest is mine, the cattle on a thousand hills." And King David answered (Psalms 51:16): "For you have no delight in sacrifice; if I were to give a burnt offering, you would not be pleased." Our Lord Christ said this (Luke 17:10): "So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say, 'We are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!'" Thirdly, even someone who is living a virtuous life from the Creation to Judgement Day would not be entitled to eternal joy because the work should match the reward, and the limited time span of virtuous deeds cannot be compared to the eternal reward. In this mortal world, there are definite limits to virtuous deeds we can accomplish, but the eternal joy is limitless. Thus, the latter cannot be a reward for the former.

Let us point to the erroneous arguments of the Catholics who are selling the virtuous life of their Saints, such as Peter and Dominic, by saying that their virtuous acts are not only sufficient to gain eternal life for themselves, but that those Saints can give some of their deeds to others so they, too, can gain eternal life.

However, the Scriptures don't say that, and our Lord Christ doesn't say that either. What they say is we may gain entry into God's country because of the pleasure and the benevolence of God—not because of the virtuous deeds of the Apostles. I don't believe that Catholics would be so ignorant as to say that their Saints are more virtuous than the Apostles, but even if they would say that, we ought not believe it, because Our Lord Christ didn't promise a bigger reward to anyone than he promised the Apostles.

From the second part of his words (Luke 12:13), when he says, "it's your Father's good pleasure" let us remember this: God expressed His love and good pleasure to Christ and his followers when He said this to His prophet (Isaiah 49:15): "Can a woman forget her nursing child, or show no compassion for the child of her womb? Even these may forget, yet I will not forget you." Our Lord Christ himself said (Luke 11:13): "If you then, who are wicked, know how to give good gifts to your children, how much more will the heavenly Father give the Holy Spirit to those who ask him!" While we ought to fear the Almighty, we also have to love Him as our Father and turn to this gracious caretaker of us with all our needs.

When we call God a Father, it has no other meaning than calling Him a source of love and providence. Those who speak about God giving "natural birth," indeed, speak against the Scripture and falsify and defile the living God. Some passages of the Scriptures seemingly refer to natural birth, but the true meanings of those passages can be ascertained once we recognize that the Scripture describes God in human and mortal terms. For example, there is a statement from St. David (Psalms 110:3): "I bore you from the womb before the Morning Star," and this passage is used to prove that Christ is a natural-born son of God. They forget the other passages of the Scriptures that mention people born to God. To that, they say the words "from the womb" are different from what St. John says in John 1:13 that God's believers are born of Him, because only Jesus is described as "from the womb" in the passage by St. David. However, their arguments are weak. First, the passage from Psalms 110:3 is about David himself. Second, both the translation and the explanation are inaccurate. Anyone can look this up—Psalms 110:3 is most frequently translated as: "in the beauties of holiness from the womb of the morning, thou hast the dew of thy youth." I shall not explain these words; I only wanted to demonstrate that the translation in the Vulgate is false. But even if we accept that translation, there is no evidence to support their interpretation. It is clearly flawed to state that the Scripture describes Jesus as a person born the natural way from the womb of God. Here is why that is so trivially flawed. The Scripture states (Isaiah 46:3–4): "Hearken unto me, O house of Jacob, and all the remnant of the house of Israel, which are borne by me from the belly, which are carried from the womb: and even to your old age I am he; and even to hoar hairs will I carry

you: I have made, and I will bear; even I will carry, and will deliver you.” Now, if we call Jesus the Son of God because he was born from the womb of God, then that applies to everyone in the House of Jacob.

Let us conclude from this that the expression “father” and the words “born by me” indicate the nature of relationship between God and His followers; that relationship is more like the care and benevolence all fathers display towards their children. Our Lord Christ expresses this also when he encourages the Apostles that they will have a heavenly benefactor who will grant them a country as they endured much sufferings and misery. That much is clear in Matthew 19 (Matthew 19:27-30), and in Luke 22 (Luke 22:29-30): “and I confer on you, just as my Father has conferred on me, a kingdom, so that you may eat and drink at my table in my kingdom, and you will sit on thrones judging the twelve tribes of Israel.” Thus, the believers and Christ will reign over their kingdom, and as the angel said (Luke 1:33), the reign of Christ is without end. This is why St. Paul says (Romans 8:18): “I consider that the sufferings of this present time are not worth comparing with the glory about to be revealed to us.” Also, in other passages, such as (Daniel 12:3): “Those who are wise shall shine like the brightness of the sky, and those who lead many to righteousness, like the stars forever and ever,” in (Matthew 13:43): “Then the righteous will shine like the sun in the kingdom of their Father,” in (1Corinthians 2:9) and in (Isaiah 64:3): “Eye hath not seen, nor ear heard, neither have entered into the heart of man, the things which God hath prepared for them that love him.”

When we believers see the affirmations of these promises, we can find comfort even during the heaviest persecution in this world.

To summarize: Let us not be discouraged by our lack of power, or by our few numbers, because, under the surface, we have many more on our side as Elijah showed his attendants (2 Kings 6:16). King David said (Psalms 34:8): “The angel of the Lord encamps around those who fear him and delivers them.” And even if the miseries of this world afflict us, and if misfortunes knock us down, we find enough comfort in that once our mortal life is over, our Heavenly Father has appointed for us, out of His good pleasure, a place where our joy and glory will never end. May our Heavenly Holy Father bless us all. Amen.