

Witnesses for Christ

By Metropolitan Saba (Isper)

The Christian is a witness for Christ, through whom people see Christ. To be a witness for Christ means that you are a witness to His Gospel, and this is not just a choice that concerns you alone, but a personal commission from the Lord to you. It is a fundamental commandment: "But you shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you; and you shall be witnesses to Me in Jerusalem, and in all Judea and Samaria, and to the end of the earth" (Acts 1:8).

When the Lord commissioned His disciples with those words, He commissioned all Christians through them, without distinction or discrimination. There is a distinction to be made between evangelizing - as a mission that requires full-time dedication - and witnessing. Evangelism is a special gift and mission, given by the Lord to those whom He had chosen to be His evangelists. The Gospel only mentions the presence of the twelve disciples of Christ when He gave them the practical instructions for the ministry of evangelizing, as detailed in Matthew 10.

The evangelist is a person set apart for this ministry. But we can all bear witness, and using our lives is one of the most important ways to do it.

Witnessing for the Lord means that you are not ashamed of Him and His Gospel, and that you strive with all your strength and ability to be faithful to Him and His teachings. You live by His commandments and walk according to His statutes. Thus, you become a living gospel, where people see in you the true Christ, and you bear witness to Him through your conduct.

Talking about Christ, or proclaiming Him, is one aspect of witnessing, but it is not the entirety of it. There is a time for speaking and a time for silence. There is a time for action and a time for prayer. And if you do not have the ability to speak, then remain silent, for your actions may speak louder than words. If you do not live according to your words about Him, it is better for you to be silent, lest His words apply to you as they did to the Pharisees: "Therefore, whatever they tell you to observe, that observe and do, but do not do according to their works; for they say, and do not do" (Matthew 23:3).

The important thing is to make your entire being His, and not just your tongue. For if you belong to Him only with your tongue, without your whole being, that becomes a condemnation for you and a distortion of the image of Christ in the eyes of those who hear you.

Witness for the Lord requires humility, especially in this time. Humility is the twin of love and its constant companion. Many people have glorified God through their humble and loving conduct, as the Gospel says, "...that they may see your good works and glorify your Father in heaven" (Matthew 5:16).

The word "witness" has two meanings in some languages like Arabic. The first implies testifying for Him. The second is to die for Him, meaning that you bear witness to Him even to the point of martyrdom, shedding your blood as the price for your testimony, never relinquishing it.

God does not ask for martyrdom from everyone. He may allow persecution from time to time, as a purification for His Church from idols and mercenaries, and as a way to put aside spiritual and moral laxity, which greatly afflicts believers these days. However, He asks for your testimony at all times and in every circumstance. That is why He said, "Whoever denies Me before men, him I will also deny before My Father who is in heaven" (Matthew 10:33).

Witness for Him means that you choose Him as your way, in good times and bad. You work to please Him, not caring for what pleases others, while remaining filled with love for them. The wicked will tempt you to hate those who pressure you to betray Christ, but you will remain truly faithful to Him if you continue to love them without yielding to their demands, hoping that He will save them and reveal Himself to them. Despising and ridiculing them will lead you to a contradictory testimony of your Lord Who is love, and His image in you will be distorted. Many have often hated Him and formed a distorted image of His reality because of the false image of Him reflected by His followers.

A French priest who befriended and participated in meetings with Marxists wrote in his memoirs: "I completely agreed with their harsh criticism of Christ and their rejection of Him. However, when I returned to my room and reflected on what transpired in the meeting, I realized that they were not

fighting against the Christ I know and worship, but against another image that has no connection to the Christ of the Gospel, a distorted image that has settled in their minds due to bad religious experiences here and there.”

Witnessing comes with a price that must be paid. Being faithful to the Lord may deprive us of things that may seem essential to humans, but for the faithful servant, they become insignificant. You testify through the simplicity of your life, for example, even if you can live in great luxury. But you don't feel like you're sacrificing luxury because living in simplicity brings you joy, freedom, and inner peace. The constant statement of the faithful witness must be, “God alone is sufficient for me,” so anything other than Him is unnecessary, and everything with Him gains meaning and significance.

Choosing to witness for your Lord does not protect you from trials; on the contrary, it places obstacles before you at all times. The evildoer is not pleased with your choice. He always wants to keep you in his grip, while you strive to be in the embrace of your Lord. This spiritual battle, if faced with steadfastness and determination, strengthens you and gives you resilience so that you prevail over everything, and nothing can dominate you. Isn't that true freedom?

You have the choice to embrace absolute loyalty to your Lord and His Gospel, and thus to live in unending happiness; or to chase unreachable illusions that push you to chase other unreachable illusions, leaving you more exhausted.

The Gospel is before you; do not hesitate to embrace it.

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