Jesus, the Sun of Justice, will Heal Us with His Love!

By Pedro Méndez

Who has not gone for a walk at dawn, during the fall, without enjoying the weather, the colors of the trees, and the majesty of the sun rising from the east? This experience is a fresh beginning for the day. I have also felt that the dawn is like a “healing experience” that comes *from* being unaware of my own self immersed in my dreams and nightmares *to* my self-awareness breathing life through my senses. And, eventually, there it is: the sun appearing at the sky with its authoritative presence and majesty!

In the Ancient Near East, the sun was a very important star. Some nations in antiquity (e.g. Egypt, Mesopotamia and Persia) considered the sun a god and developed a *winged sun disk* as a symbol associated with divinity, power, and authority. This symbol had the sun in the center with wings around it. The winged sun disk represented the sun of righteousness. In the Bible, the sun is not a god; but a creature made by God: God created “the greater light to rule the day” (Gn 1:16). Today’s first reading declares: “But for you who fear my name, there will arise the sun of righteousness with its healing wings” (Ml 3:20a). The word “*wings”* is translated in the Catholic lectionary as *rays.* Thus, *the sun of righteousness will heal us with his rays*. And, even though the first reading does not refer to God as a winged sun disk; “the implication is that God will rise on the ‘day of the Lord’ to effect *healing* for the righteous” (W. Sibley Towner).

And God, indeed, has effected healing for the righteous in the person of Jesus Christ. By following one of the themes of today’s gospel, we can say that *Jesus is the Sun of Righteousness that heals the righteous person who comes from the night of persecution to a new day of peace.* Luke proclaims beautifully at the beginning of his gospel: “By the tender mercy of God, the dawn from on high will break upon us, to give light to those who sit in darkness and in the shadow of death, to guide our feet into the way of peace” (Lk 1:78-79). Now, the Bible describes that “nothing is hid from [the sun’s] heat” (Psalm 19:6). *Thus, by applying the figure of the sun to Jesus we believe that He knows, warms, and justifies all creation —especially us, human beings—by his sacrificial offering on the Cross.*

Why, do the righteous people—the ones who are being constantly justified by Jesus—also need to be healed by Him. By following the context of today’s gospel, we might say that *we, missionary disciples being constantly justified by Jesus, need to be healed from the wounds of persecution due to Jesus’ name*. This persecution, with a hopeful end, is described dramatically by Jesus himself in today’s gospel. Indeed, persecution is part of being Jesus’ missionary disciples. He will allow us to go through the night of persecution, not by ourselves; but with Him at our side, especially in His Eucharistic presence. But at the dawn—when the persecutions have been summited to Jesus —He will heal us with his tender love!

Are we being persecuted because of the name of Jesus in our family, social and work circles? Jesus will heal us with his tender love! Meanwhile, we might want to pray and to strive for the virtues of courage and endurance, and by doing so, God will strengthen us to achieve our goal—eternal life—amid any obstacle, including persecution. Jesus affirms in today’s gospel: “By your endurance you will gain your souls” (Lk 21:19).

Hopefully today, last Sunday of Ordinary Time, just before beginning to prepare ourselves for Christmas day (the old Roman celebration of the birth of the Unconquered Sun which Christianity gave a new meaning: the birth of the Jesus Christ, the Sun of Justice), we might consider to ask Jesus to heal us from the wounds caused by the night of persecution in our lives. Maybe, we might also consider to contemplate during the coming Advent season the collect prayer of Christmas Mass at Dawn: *“Grant, we pray, almighty God, that, as we are bathed in a new radiance of your incarnate Word, the light of faith, which illumines our minds, may also shine through our deeds.” Amen.*