Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Dec 26th 2014

Stephen, protomartyr

The first always has a special place in the history. Today, we celebrate the martyrdom of the first martyr for Christ: St. Stephen. He is the first of the seven deacons chosen to assist the Apostles (cf. Act 6:5). He was a man of faith and was filled with the Holy Spirit. He was also filled with God's grace and power. He did great wonders and signs among the people. He preached the Gospel of Jesus with conviction and courage. People flocked him to hear his teaching. Since he was a man of wisdom and the Spirit, people could not defeat him in argument. So, a few instigated people against Stephen and wanted to finish him off out of jealousy. He was dragged to the Council and was accused of speaking against the Jerusalem temple and the Torah. In this life-threatening situation, Stephen boldly delivered a powerful sermon where he defended his position and charged the people of not leading a life according to God's commandment and words. Then comes the cruel martyrdom by stunning stoning. He died as a model martyr. He taught us how we should die for Christ. There were striking similarities between the death of Jesus and the martyrdom of St. Stephen. Like Jesus, even in death he bore witness to the Gospel values by forgiving his persecutors and killers. His courage to stand for Jesus and his Gospel, his witnessing life to Jesus and the Gospel values, his dedication for the Gospel, and the sacrifice of his own life should continue to inspire us. Today, we can also be martyrs by raising our voice against injustice, joining hands with movements that work for the liberation of the poor and marginalized and undergoing sufferings and rejection for the sake of the Gospel values!

Fr. Maria Arul Jesu Robin, cmf