

Commentary on the Gospel for Mon, Apr 11th 2016

Memorial of Saint Stanislaus, Bishop and Martyr

Today is the memorial of Saint Stanislaus , bishop and Martyr. Reading the story of St. Stanislaus who died in the 11th century reminds us that being a Christian and standing up for what you believe in has never been easy. Known as a great preacher and spiritual director, he incurred the wrath of the King when he spoke out about his injustices. While one may hope that such identification may result in a change of behavior, that does not happen many times and this was no exception. St. Stanislaus was courageous enough to even excommunicate the king and paid for it with his life. King Boleslaus the Bold lived up to his name when killed St. Stanislaus himself while the bishop was saying mass. Bold, indeed!!

Our first reading is also about a courageous and articulate martyr, St. Stephen, who is recognized as our first martyr of those following Christ. While he did not directly confront behaviors of a particular person, his speaking with wisdom and empowered by the Holy Spirit threatened many. So much so that it was necessary to bear false witness against him. Sometimes as I try to process the politics of our time, locally, nationally, and internationally, I wonder who is speaking with wisdom and the Holy Spirit and who are those threatened bearing false witness? I must confess that most times, I conclude that the wisdom and inspiration seem in short supply. Both St. Stanislaus and St. Stephen followed their hearts guided by the Holy Spirit. Both made enemies by preaching and acting upon their beliefs. Current day martyrs are doing the same as they stand up and are recognized as Christians in a less than welcoming world at times. They are Easter people, proud to be called Christians and bold enough to die for it.

It fits that our responsorial psalm blesses those that follow the law of the Lord. As I read of statutes and precepts, law and ordinances, I thought of the temptations we have to constantly pull us away from those directives. We are consistently bombarded with ways, things, and, sometimes, even people pulling us in all directions except toward the Lord. My husband and I were talking just this past weekend of how easy it is to have “false gods” – the attraction of things and activities that fill our lives yet leave us empty. Not empty like the tomb that was filled hope but rather empty like a vacuum ready to collapse upon itself. An emptiness that can be filled if we let it with the light and hope of Christ. Yet, so often, these things occupy our time as we declare we don’t have time to pray enough or to do works of mercy.

The gospel has Jesus telling us that we are not to work for food that perishes. Rather, Jesus urges us to work for food that endures for eternal life. We find this food in our belief in Christ. Further it is critical that we live what we believe and do that through our actions. How we spend our time is very telling – we may say whatever about our priorities but the truth is reflected in our activities and goals. I know I must do some honest reflection upon how I spend my time and if they match what I espouse as most important.

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