

December 26, 2023

Daily Reflections



THE COST OF DISCIPLESHIP

By Sr. Jane DeLisle, CSJ

An Excerpt from Today's Gospel

Jesus said to his disciples:

*"Beware of men, for they will hand you over to courts
and scourge you in their synagogues,
and you will be led before governors and kings for my sake
as a witness before them and the pagans.*

*When they hand you over,
do not worry about how you are to speak
or what you are to say.*

You will be given at that moment what you are to say.

***For it will not be you who speak
but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you. ..."***

MATTHEW 10:17-20

Reflection

Today's readings stand in sharp contrast to those of Christmas rejoicing. We do not have the luxury to rest in the gracious peace of angel song announcing the new-born Christ child. As the joy lingers, the stark correlation to the crucifixion reverberates in today's realization of the cost of discipleship.

The 26th of December commemorates the life and martyrdom of St. Stephen. The proximity to the peace and joy of Christmas is startling. It reminds us that our witness is at once life-giving and costly. Our faith is one that engages the totality of life. Christmas, Good Friday, and Easter are intricately interwoven as one.

The gracious light of God's presence permeates our times, as do sin and darkness. St. Stephen, a Christian deacon in Jerusalem known for his service to the poor, is also the first martyr. He was stoned to death in 36 AD for proclaiming his faith in Jesus. People still pay the price for their faith, way of life, and ethnicity.

It is right and good to cling to the echo of angel chorus singing "Alleluia and glory to God in the highest." When life is difficult and faith is challenged, the memory might fortify our souls. When we most need to give witness to our discipleship, we ***"will be given at that moment what [we] are to say. For it will not be you who speak but the Spirit of your Father speaking through you."*** The Spirit of Jesus springs into life within souls, giving the words those called to task must proclaim.

While suffering and joy exist simultaneously within us, the truth remains that **GOD IS WITH US!** God loves us unconditionally. God dwells amid the light and the darkness of our lives. God is our constant companion who always seeks us out. We, like St. Stephen, are to let our lives speak the blessing of God on our beautiful and wounded world.

We are people of many faiths who are to bring the healing, compassion, mercy, hope, and love so desperately needed. You and I are now the ones who are to speak the words given us by the Holy Spirit for today. May our lives proclaim the love and presence of God. There is a cost of discipleship, but it is born in love.



Vík, Iceland
Photo by Alicia Rodriguez

For Pondering

- What are joys and sorrows carried in my heart and, therefore, in the heart of God?
- How do I recognize God within me?

- What is the Word of the Spirit entrusted to me?

For Prayer

*Gracious God of Life and Goodness,
awaken in me the courage and wisdom needed
to speak truth to power and love
in the presence of the suffering, threats, and hatred in our society.
Strengthen me in the Spirit
to be a voice for the voiceless and hope to the suffering.
Come, Holy One, into the fabric of my being.
Amen.*

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