

Homily 18th April 2021 - Witness to Christ

'Witness' – This is a word used by Simon Peter in the First Reading and then by Jesus in the Gospel. To be a 'Witness' is someone who is prepared to testify about the truth even to the point of staking their own life on it. Simon Peter in Acts states boldly that he is a witness to the resurrected Christ. He's seen the evidence for himself.

In the Gospel, Jesus right at the end of Luke's account reminds the apostles that they are the witnesses to him being the eternal Messiah; the Son of God...
The whole of the Gospels, Matthew, Mark, Luke and John are all a testimony to the truth of who Jesus is.... The truth of the redemption and salvation.

However, not all of us are comfortable with being a witness for Jesus, to the point of sacrificing our lives in His name, to be a true witness, as all of life is a test or trail, and God is the judge; means sharing the evidence; providing the testimony and defending his teaching. The prosecution are the 'dark forces' of this world that are anti-Christian, whose purpose is to promote corruption, evil and desecration of human life. Those for whom the power of Christian ethics is a threat to their own temporal power; AM I prepared to stand up for my faith?

Many of the martyrs of the Church, a name which also means witness, are those women, men and children who have stood firm in the course of justice, love and truth.... despite hatred and death threats... Like 'Revelation' itself is wonderful and appropriate word to describe what Jesus achieves for us in his incarnation. To answer those telling questions....

Who is God? How do I know God exists? What is God's teaching for us? How do I know God knows me and loves me? The relation of the Father to the Son?

'Revelation' means 'bringing to light' or making aware. That is what Jesus does right from the first day at the synagogue in Nazareth, where he declares to the world the fulfilment of prophecy, "The Spirit of the Lord is upon me, he has anointed me to bring good news to the poor. "Here is a God who knows me, loves me and understands me. – Now his mission is to make the twelve apostles his witness to the resurrection". Like Sr Maria Gomez, who tried to defend the Amazonian Indians from deforestation of their homeland who was assassinated in 2003. Or the French priest who was beheaded in Brittany for celebrating the Mass in 2019, or Francis Odgo who was executed for running a Catholic Primary School in Northern Nigeria (2020).

These atrocities are unfamiliar in our own lands but the challenge of bearing witness to Christ is still very real to us, - that we are not afraid like Simon Peter to be people of the resurrection; to witness to the cross of our Lord; to defend the right of religious freedom and be unafraid to make the sign of the cross in a cemetery or bless ourselves before sharing a meal; to tell our employers that Sunday is my religious day for going to Mass and my spiritual needs must be met.

The power of bearing witness of Christ was vindicated by truth, fuelled by the Holy Spirit; otherwise, how good a disordered collection of 12 Apostles have brought to an end the temporal power of the Roman Empire and replaced it with the Spiritual power of Holy Mother Church.

Now, in the present age, you and me are the witnesses. God is calling on us to be fervent in our faith, untiring in our love, and persevering in the cause of the Kingdom of God.

God Bless you all, Alleluia!

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