

SUNDAY OF THE MYRRH-BEARING WOMEN

Have you heard the saying “A true friend is the one who walks in when everyone else walks out”? I think all of us have experienced this at one time or another in our lives. When our lives are going well we all have an abundance of friends, and when things seem a bit tough, many who we thought were our friends are pretty scarce or have walked away for good. This is what this Sunday commemorates.

We remember the faithfulness of the women, the “Myrrh Bearers”. While Jesus was being condemned and needed the support of his disciples, not one was to be seen except for John. We hear in the gospels how each time they were asked if they knew Jesus, they denied it. The only faithful to him were the women and John. Jesus knew before these events that he could not rely on his disciples; he even said to Peter, “I assure you that when the cock crows you will have denied me three times.” He also knew that it was not because they didn’t love him that they would not be around when he needed them most, but because their fear at the time would be greater than love or faith.

The women on the other hand had a love and a faith that was greater than fear. Mary his mother stops on the road to Calvary to share his pain and sorrow. Veronica boldly steps up to wipe his face and refresh him. The women stand faithfully at the foot of the cross, and it is they who prepare the body for burial. It is also the women who are given the good news of the resurrection before the disciples.

So what then does this all mean for you and me? I think it is a good reminder of our human nature, and it can strengthen us in our resolve to let love overcome fear. Fear is the breeder of dissension and violence. It is the cause of prejudice and war. Love is the conqueror. Where love is abundant there is harmony and peace. Where love is scarce there is often chaos and confusion. The apostles eventually grew to overcome their fear through love and the Church was able then to flourish.

The Church has had her periods when her fear too; was greater than her love, and much suffering was inflicted on others in the name of Jesus. It also at times is slow in becoming more authentic to the times in which we live and minister. But the Church has also had periods where love was so much greater, and it is in these times that she shone like a beacon in a dark world.

We live in a society where we are taught by the world to only think of ourselves. Consumerism tells us how happy we are when we have every “thing”, yet deep within ourselves we come to recognize that it is not these “things” that we

long for. What you and I need and want is to know that we have a sense of purpose for our lives. We want to know that we make a difference in the world. We need to know that our lives count and that we are loved. It is God who gives us that sense of stability and satisfaction. Male or female makes no difference to God in ministering to the needs of others; this is a human barrier that was created over time and I believe that eventually through the Holy Spirit it will change. Unfortunately for many not soon enough, but we have to be patient and understand that God's time is not ours, and things unfold as we are ready to accept them.

For now you and I can assist in the work of the Holy Spirit by building bridges and knocking down walls. We can be open to new ways of thinking and acting in a world that is still very much intolerant of anything that challenges its way of thinking. We can challenge ourselves to move beyond our comfort level so that the Spirit of the Risen Christ can and will be a real presence to us and all we meet.

Let us pray:

Lord you came that we might come to know that we are all equal in your eyes and in the eyes of Your Father. Your apostles themselves taught us that in God there is neither male nor female, but all are a new creation in Christ Jesus. Help me to understand this. When there is an opportunity for ministry or any other task, let me judge by a person's ability and not their gender. You live, and work, and act in all. Your resurrection has raised us to a new awareness. We are all called to a life of service to one another. Let my love always be strong enough to conquer my fears. Amen.