



Daily Reflections

February 8, 2019

Scripture

Mark 6: 14-29

King Herod heard about Jesus, for his fame had become widespread, and people were saying,

"John the Baptist has been raised from the dead;

That is why mighty powers are at work in him."

Others were saying, "He is Elijah";

still others, "He is a prophet like any of the prophets."

But when Herod learned of it, he said,

"It is John whom I beheaded. He has been raised up."

Herod was the one who had John arrested and bound in prison

on account of Herodias,

the wife of his brother Philip, whom he had married.

John had said to Herod,

"It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife."

Herodias harbored a grudge against him

and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so.

Herod feared John, knowing him to be a righteous and holy man, and kept him in custody.

When he heard him speak he was very much perplexed, yet he liked to listen to him.

Herodias had an opportunity one day when Herod, on his birthday, gave a banquet for his courtiers, his military officers, and the leading men of Galilee.

His own daughter came in and performed a dance
that delighted Herod and his guests.
The king said to the girl,
"Ask of me whatever you wish and I will grant it to you."
He even swore many things to her,
"I will grant you whatever you ask of me,
even to half of my kingdom."
She went out and said to her mother,
"What shall I ask for?"
Her mother replied, "The head of John the Baptist."
The girl hurried back to the king's presence and made her request,
"I want you to give me at once on a platter
the head of John the Baptist."
The king was deeply distressed,
but because of his oaths and the guests
he did not wish to break his word to her.
So he promptly dispatched an executioner
with orders to bring back his head.
He went off and beheaded him in the prison.
He brought in the head on a platter
and gave it to the girl.
The girl in turn gave it to her mother.
When his disciples heard about it,
they came and took his body and laid it in a tomb.

Our Scripture Reflection

Throughout our history Christians have been subject to the ultimate form of persecution: Martyrdom. And while it boggles the mind as to how these men and women could go to their deaths often singing the praises of the Lord, to them it was a calling, a way of showing their love for the Lord. One amazing thing happened as the result of a martyr's death: The faith would spread. Although you and I live in a land where we are guaranteed freedom to practice our faith, there are parts of the world where martyrdom is a daily possibility. Please pray for them.

Food for your Journey

John the Baptist was, of course, not the only person beheaded for his faith. Another person who received such treatment was Albanus who lived in Roman-occupied Britain during the emperor Diocletian's persecution of Christians.

Little is known of Albanus' faith-history, but we do know that when a Christian priest fleeing Roman soldiers showed up at his door, Albanus took him in. The priest evidently impressed him with his piety, because, when the soldiers returned several days later, Albanus threw the priest's cloak over his shoulders and pretended to be him.

He was arrested. Although Albanus' true identity came out at the trial, he let it be known that he had become a Christian and would not renounce his faith to pay homage to Roman gods.

The Romans beheaded him. He has since become known as Saint Alban, England's first Christian martyr.

Jake Owensby comments: "If Alban's story had been a Hollywood blockbuster, we would have expected him to take out the bad guys in a blaze of gunfire and a flurry of martial arts action. Instead, he lays down his life without so much as drawing a sword or throwing a punch.

"Even though he was a very new Christian, Alban seems to have learned the paradoxical truth at the center of our faith. Paul put it this way, 'If we have been united with him in a death like his, we will certainly be united with him in a resurrection like his' (Romans 6:5).

"Alban had already died in the most significant way: spiritually. That meant that he was already alive in a way that could never be taken away from him.

"Christ's death is more than a biological demise. We'll all meet our biological end. No matter what any of us does, one day our hearts will stop and our brain activity will cease.

"Christ's death is a profound letting go."

--Jake Owensby, "Martyrdom of Alban," Ministrymatters.com, June 26, 2017. Retrieved January 6, 2018.

A Prayer from the Heart

Dear God, Keep my faith strong so that when my faith in You is put to the test, I may give witness to my love for You. May others find courage and strength through my witness. Amen