October 28, 2019

Scripture

Luke 6:12-16
Jesus went up to the mountain to pray, and he spent the night in prayer to God. When day came, he called his disciples to himself, and from them he chose Twelve, whom he also named Apostles: Simon, whom he named Peter, and his brother Andrew, James, John, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Simon who was called a Zealot, and Judas the son of James, and Judas Iscariot, who became a traitor.

Our Scripture Reflection

Only after being immersed throughout the night in prayer, Jesus descends from the mountaintop and calls to Himself His twelve apostles. Please note: He does not ask for their theological degrees; He does not ask for an entrance fee; He does not ask for medals or certificates that might prove their valor...no, He calls them as they are, warts and pimples and freckles and all. Because He is God, He can see deeply into their hearts, their minds, their souls, and what He sees is good enough for Him.

Food for your Journey

The Greek word for “witness” is one you’ll all recognize. It’s the word martyres: martyrs. In today’s English, “martyr” may bring to mind a variety of images. In a world where terrorist acts are not uncommon, religious extremists who detonate bombs on their own bodies in public places, thereby murdering innocent bystanders, are often described as martyrs by those devoted to the same cause.
For Christians, the image is much different. Martyrs are those, usually in the past, who courageously and very publicly sacrificed their lives for the faith. The annals of the early church are replete with stories of courageous believers who gave up their lives rather than renounce their faith in Christ.

But, unlike the terrorists of today, early Christian martyrs never sought their own martyrdom and certainly did not commit suicide to be considered a martyr. And — horrors! — they would not and did not murder others as they performed their own martyrdom. In fact, church leaders at the time cautioned against seeking martyrdom.

The first martyr in the Scriptures is the apostle Stephen, who — as the Book of Acts tells us — was stoned to death. The letter to the Hebrews rattles off a list of those who suffered mightily — and triumphantly — for their faith:

“Others were tortured, refusing to accept release, in order to obtain a better resurrection. Others suffered mocking and flogging and even chains and imprisonment. They were stoned to death, they were sawn in two, they were killed by the sword; they went about in skins of sheep and goats, destitute, persecuted, tormented — of whom the world was not worthy” (11:35-38).

The early church placed great value on what those courageous disciples did. Unlike the sort of witnesses who sit in court and just say a lot of words, these witnesses — these martyrs — testified to their faith by how they lived and how they died.

**A Prayer from the Heart**

Dear Jesus, There is nothing that I could do to make myself worthy of Your calling for me to be Your disciple. You take me as I am. But with the help of Your Grace which is always available to me, You give me the ability to be a witness to You. As I live my calling, help me to be humble, faithful and true. Amen