

SEPTEMBER 11 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

Pretty strong reading. Today's reading in Luke is a sermon on...

I was going to say the Sermon on the Mount, but it's a sermon on the plain. It is very similar to the Sermon on the Mount found in Matthew. As I read this, especially one line stood out to me: "Blessed are you when people hate you, and when they exclude you, revile you, and defame you on account of the Son of Man."

As I reflect on this line, I think of many of you in the TV Mass community. How many of us live quietly... a quiet martyrdom in our lives, in our marriages, or with our children, striving to live out our faith? Oftentimes, we are looked down upon as parents or spouses, perceived as unworthy or a bit crazy. Yet, we just continue on.

This reading is so important for us to live out— to be aware of it, to take heart, and to keep doing what you're doing. It encourages us to remain steady in our faith, to keep praying, and to not be afraid of being judged, because that is what happens. Yes, judged we will be, but we will also face judgment at the end— at the Second Coming.

As the gospel reading continues with "Woe to you..." and the various woes, it reminds us to keep praying. We pray for our own children, for our grandchildren, and often we pray for our spouses— for that spouse who may not believe and thinks we are a little bit crazy for attending Mass. It is crucial to stay steady in your faith, to keep pressing forward.

Of course, this is about our relationship with Christ. In the first reading from 1 Corinthians, Paul speaks with urgency, writing with the thought that the Second Coming was imminent. He advises, "If you're married, live as if you're not married. If you're a virgin, try not to get married." However, he reassures us that one does not sin by getting married. Ultimately, he calls us to live clean lives.

It is vital for our words and prayers to align with how we live our lives because we will be judged here on Earth, often by our own family members—our children, friends, and so on. They may wonder, "Are you praying?" and question whether our lives reflect that faith.

We should regularly reflect and ask ourselves, "How can I stay the course, steady until my last breath?" This is incredibly important.

Additionally, today, on the universal calendar, we celebrate Blessed Charles Spinola, a Jesuit who was burned at the stake in 1622 in Japan. His story serves as a powerful example of steady faith in God. He embarked on a missionary journey to Japan in 1595, which took him six years due to multiple unforeseen obstacles.

After departing from Lisbon, his ship encountered a storm that damaged the rudder, causing them to end up in Brazil. Once there, he continued his missionary work despite the unexpected detour. After his ship was repaired, they attempted to return to Portugal but were hit by another storm that diverted them to Puerto Rico.

They had to repair the ship once again, and ultimately, he was captured by the English, prolonging his journey. He finally made it back to Lisbon in 1599 and set sail for Japan again in 1599, facing fewer storms this time.

He arrived in Japan in 1602, where he served for about twenty years. Unfortunately, after twelve years, the faith was declared illegal, forcing him to minister underground. Remarkably, the church in Japan, discovered in the 1850s, had thrived for about 250 years without official priests, thanks in part to missionaries like Spinola.

In the last four years of his life, he lived in confinement, almost like a bird in a cage, subject to public ridicule. He was ultimately martyred during what was called the Great Genna Martyrdom, where 55 missionaries and Japanese Christians lost their lives for their faith.

When we read accounts like these, and compare them to our own lives, we realize how relatively easy we have it to be the light of Christ, even amidst ridicule in our own families. We have the example of someone who literally gave his life and endured immense suffering— burned at the stake in the end. Amen.