DECEMBER 13 2025 FATHER HENK VAN MEIJEL

In the first reading and our Gospel reading, it's all about Elijah. And it's kind of interesting that we have that, such a celebration of Elijah.

But the Jewish community was waiting for the return of Elijah, to usher in the end-times. And, of course, Jesus ushered in the end-times. But they were waiting, expecting that Elijah would come. Jesus explains that Elijah has been, John was really like Elijah. Of course John was not Elijah, we don't believe in reincarnation, but he came like Elijah, to show the way.

Now John never said anything that he was—that he was in the footsteps of Elijah. But he said, I'm preparing the way. And he probably might have been very taken back when someone said, You're the second Elijah. But, nevertheless, Elijah is very important, of course, in the Old Testament, and for us.

And in the first reading of Sirach, Sirach which was written about 200 years before Christ, we have that celebration of Elijah. And Elijah, really the model for the ascension of Christ, how Elijah rose to heaven, the same as Jesus would rise to heaven, and ushering a new time to come. It is very much—and today, we celebrate Saint Lucy of Syracuse. Saint Lucy of Syracuse, who's so important to all of us.

I should actually back up a little bit... The last line of Sirach, it says "Blessed is he who has seen you, and who falls asleep in your friendship." And this also was the inspiration I'm sure for Saint Lucy. She had seen God, and she fell asleep in God's friendship. And, and of course, Saint Lucy, she was martyred, she gave everything to God.

NATIONAL CATHOLIC BROADCASTING COUNCIL

And the critics would say "Oh, gee, Saint Lucy is just one of those Christian romances." You know, she had a suitor, and she rejected her suitor, and she said Christ was her suitor. Christ was her lover. And the easy can neglect that, and say, oh, that's just silly romance stuff, but it is real. We don't know, really, that much about Saint Lucy, but she must have made an incredible impression. Especially in the early 4th Century, when she was martyred. In three or four, she was from a well-to-do family, upper class. And really, most Christians would have been the slaves, and those who were at the bottom of the social ladder. And so she made an incredible impression, that she would give up her life for Christ.

And this romance, it is so important. This giving up to Christ. To be with Christ is a love affair. She had a love affair with Christ. Well, for me of course, for obvious reasons, Christ is not a good thing for me to be in a love affair with. I don't connect with that for obvious reasons. But my love affair with God, and to give my life totally to God, in whatever way it was used—is going to be used, is very important to me. Because God has touched my heart deeply, many years ago, and it changed everything.

And this continues over the eons. As we each, in our own way, come to God. And hopefully give our life to God. When there's a conversion, a real conversion, then everything changes. It doesn't matter if we are "cradle Catholics," or we converted to the Catholic faith. But everything changes.

Today, our sponsor, as you might have heard, are the Sisters of Providence of Saint Vincent de Paul, in Kingston. Celebrating 164 years of ministry. And it really all started with Blessed Emilie Gamelin, in 1843, in Montreal. Where she recognized that she was a widow, and she

had plenty of suffering in her life, and she recognized that, um, this great need for service to the poor. And especially, initially, poor older single women who were living in poverty. To give them a decent end of their life, and to be there for them. And to surround them with love. And this eventually grew to orphanages, and so on. And it just spread.

And it is a love affair with God. These women who freely gave their life for the good of others. To recognize a need in society, and so on. And today, it continues. We have with us today Sister Karen Bennett. A sister—a Sister of Providence, she's been here at Manresa for over 40 years. Over 40 years, as a spiritual director and counsellor. And people flock to her, especially in the AA community, for that touch of God.. She has that love affair with God. And like I have a love affair with God. And she wants to spread that good news. If she did it for the money, she would've gone 40 years ago, because there's not much money to be made. But it's that love affair we have with God.

And I invite you too, right now, as we come to the end of this homily, to today, to take some time, and pray with your relationship with God. Is Jesus your lover? Is God your lover? Am I willing to give everything to God, and trust God's providence when I go through daily life? It's not easy stuff, but when God touches our heart, we really act on it, then we also, as in the last line of Sirach, we will "fall asleep in God's friendship," and we will be with God in heaven. Amen.