

MARTYRDOM OF JOHN THE BAPTIST (MC 6:14-29)

Homily by Fr. Thaddeus Nguyen

Saint Thomas Becket of Canterbury is known as Thomas of London. He is venerated as a saint and a martyr by both the Catholic Church and Anglican Community. Engaged in conflict with Henry II of England over the rights and privileges of the Church, he was murdered in Canterbury Cathedral by followers of the king. When he and his closest companions were surrounded in the Cathedral, his companions wanted to fight until death, yet he said, "Open the door wide. I do not want to change this sacred place of prayer into a fortress. The Church has her own way to protect her believers; therefore the Church should open the door, even to enemies!"

In hearing his order, some friends still hesitated and preferred to fight until death. He added, "You should have a supernatural vision and you can arm yourselves with supernatural weapons." Then he concluded, "We battle against monsters of the world and we defeated them. We should conquer them only by our sufferings. This strategy is not difficult because it is in suffering that the Cross triumphs over death. Open the door!"

A long time ago, St. John the Baptist shed his blood for the truth that he proclaimed. The death of St. John the Baptist manifested the force of love. He proclaimed the salvation of God even in his own death. He lived the Good News he proclaimed, by life and in death, by work and by teaching. Moreover, he went before the Christ and by his very life he predicted the death of Jesus, as well as that of the righteous people. Indeed, hearing the story of his death today in today's Gospel, we can understand the destiny of the disciples, the followers and the lovers of God.

The wicked could silence some righteous men, but they cannot silence all the righteous people. That is why the famous saying of Tertullian is always right: *The blood of the martyrs is the seed of the Church.*

The martyrdom of John the Baptist is continually lived every day, in every form, by Christians in the world: in the Middle East, Iraq, Syria, in Eastern Europe: Russia, Asia, China, Vietnam and North Korea.

Death is a terrible end for human beings, but for those who have faith in God, death is less terrifying because there is still hope in the resurrection of Christ. Only in the light of the resurrection of Christ is the nonsensical death of John the Baptist meaningful. He proclaimed the Good News and died for the truth he praised. He testified for the truth he believed in and died for the one by whom we are all saved.

*Our Lord is worthy of all praise, for he was the first who is resurrected from death,
the first fruit for all who died in justice.*

Let us pray to him for the church, for the world and for us.

*That all Christians be given the encouragement and the guidance to resist immoral
And the sinful presence of current pagan culture.*

We pray to the Lord.

*May peace come to all parts of our troubled world and my all people welcome God
In their lives and live together in peace.*

We pray to the Lord.

*God our Father, hear the prayers of those who praise you for your mighty power. St. John
The Baptist was ready to follow your Son in suffering and death. With his intercession, keep us
loving the truth and persevering in following your Son's footsteps.*

We ask this...

