



Reflection on the Scriptures of the Day

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Friday of the Sixth Week of Easter

In the first reading from Acts, Saint Paul struggled with fear but received reassurance from God that spoke directly to his need: “Do not be afraid. Go on speaking, and do not be silent, for I am with you.” His experience provides some reassurance for us as well.

Although it is uncommon for Christians in America to be beaten or attacked on account of speaking or believing, there are repercussions for holding fast to the truth. We live in a time when people of faith need the courage to speak and not be silent. How often have we seen when one speaks out for traditional marriage or against abortion and euthanasia that they are subjected to vicious personal attacks by those in disagreement, attacks which are designed to deter others from standing up and bearing witness. Fear and intimidation are indeed at work, but faith is also at work. We may not receive a voice from the Lord, as Paul did, but we can be strengthened through the scriptures as well as from the power of being in community with others who believe. Words of encouragement and assurance can be powerful in driving out fear, building faith, and embracing our role in the future as God presents it.

The mystery of evil, pain, and suffering is beyond our understanding. Jesus never promised that we would not suffer, nor did He promise to fix our lives. Jesus did however promise to be with us always to lighten the load, to soften the pain, to be our companion and compassionate presence on our journey.

The Gospel reading reminds us that faith sometimes means not being in sync with the world. Those who do not love and serve God may indeed be rejoicing over things that should cause weeping and shame. However, we are encouraged to persevere, with the promised fulfillment of our hope in joy. May God give each of us the reassurance we need, along with the wisdom and strength to bear witness to our faith and the truth.