

“Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna” (Matthew 10:28).

Dear brothers and sisters, last Sunday was the Feast of the Most Holy Body and Blood of Christ. Using the image of the shroud of Turin, our beloved Bishop David Talley, who celebrated the Mass, reminded us that before the resurrection, the body of the Lord we receive in the Eucharist had been bruised, broken and brutalized. It is the broken and brutalized Lord who brought life and redemption to the world. God's love is stronger than human wickedness, life prevails over sin and death.

This Sunday, through the First Reading (Jeremiah 20: 10-13), Psalm 69, and the Gospel (Matthew 10: 26-33), the Word of Truth tells us that God rescues his people from the power of the wicked. The Lord assures us that evil does not have the last word. This is why we should not be afraid. The theme of today's homily is "When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord have mercy on me." The key

verse is "Do not be afraid of those who kill the body but cannot kill the soul; rather, be afraid of the one who can destroy both soul and body in Gehenna" (Matthew 10:28). Our Lord gave this admonition to the Apostles as he sent them into the world to evangelize. This applies to us today. The circumstances of the first century world in which the Apostles lived and labored were much like ours. It was largely a pagan world which persecuted Christianity, the minority, and killed the Christians and the vulnerable with reckless abandon. In fact, all the Apostles but two became martyrs. Our time is neopagan and Godless. Our time kills the vulnerable, the innocent¹ and the minority.² The last century witnessed more bloodshed than any other in recorded history.

While reeling under the heavy weight of a suspected man-made pandemic, the untold violence and brutality of suffocating George Floyd happened. This was followed by other senseless killings and mayhem. These evils engender fears and

¹ Since Roe vs Wade in 1973, over sixty-one million babies had been killed via abortion. It is chilling to know that this is almost twice the population of Canada today and almost equal to the population of United Kingdom with its sixty six million people. The accurate figure according to CDC and Guttmacher Institute is 61,628,584 abortions since 1973.

² Think of the many of our brothers and sisters who are unjustly killed everyday.

uncertainties in the hearts of all peace-loving citizens. In this sense, our time mirrors that of the prophet Jeremiah who cried, "I hear whispering of many: Terror on every side (Jeremiah 20:13). In our time, it is not a whispering but a big bang and a splash of killing and wanton destruction fuelled by racism, hatred and godlessness. We need moral and spiritual healing in our Land.

As the disciples of Jesus, what is our hope in the face of this turmoil? We must always remember that we are not alone and that evil will never prevail. The prophet Jeremiah gave voice to our confidence, "The Lord is with me, like a mighty champion, my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph. In their failure they will be put to utter shame, to lasting, unforgettable confusion" (Jeremiah 20: 11). The Lord says to us what he said to the Apostles, "Fear no one." (Matthew 10:26). The only one we must be afraid of is the one who can destroy body and soul in the Gehenna. That one is the Father of lies and prince of darkness. His strategy is to get us into sin and moral quagmire. We must resist his wiles. Falling into his trap leads to a land where the entrance sign reads, "Abandon all hope all who enter

here."³ Prayer unmasks the ploys and deceits of the enemy no matter how sugar coated or disguised. The enemy's trademark is death, destruction and division. Communism in all its hues and shades exemplifies DEATH, DESTRUCTION AND DIVISION in the world today.

Uniting our voices with the prophetic word of the Son of God in his agony, we cry out, "I pray to you, O LORD, for the time of your favor, O God! In your great kindness answer me with your constant help. Answer me, O LORD, for bounteous is your kindness; in your great mercy turn toward me." (Psalm 69:14-15).

Brothers and sisters, many mighty things happen when our knees are on the ground and our face to GOD ON HIGH. The wall of Jericho came down without a shot of spear or arrow. It was the power of the Most High unleashed through the united prayer of God's people. When I fall on my knees with my face to the rising sun, O Lord have mercy on me."⁴

³ Dante, Inferno.

⁴ African American Spiritual.