

Fr. Romeo Evangelista's Homily
May 17, 2020
Sixth Sunday of Easter (A)

A few years ago, four nuns of the Missionaries of Charity were killed in cold blood by terrorists in Yemen. Together with them was a Salesian missionary priest who, upon learning that the terrorists were coming, rushed to the chapel to consume the Sacred Hosts, talking extreme care to prevent desecration.

The Superior of the sisters community lived to tell the tale. The priest was abducted and taken elsewhere. The hand written account of the Superior was gripping as it was saddening. All this was clearly a case of persecution on the part of those who actively hated Christianity and its followers.

The testimony of the Sister Superior was, unbeknown to her, a fulfillment of what Saint Peter counseled in our Second Reading: "Always be ready to give an explanation to anyone who asks you for a reason for your hope".

This is what martyrdom, etymologically and essentially, is all about. It is all about witnessing. It is all about proclaiming to the world that one has hope despite the terror and the pain; that one keeps the faith in the midst of so much faithlessness; that one can show gentleness and reverence despite being defamed and maligned. This is what the true love of God can do for all of us, give us all the courage, hope and strength to give glory to His name.

I make no secrets about the fact that certain missionary areas, where many religious and priests are based, are veritable danger zones. There is so much hatred around them, and life thereabouts is always fraught with lurking danger. But I am well aware too that in precisely those areas, life is teeming with love. Scores, if not hundreds, of selfless missionaries continue to minister to everyone of whatever religion and persuasion, feeding them, teaching them, and working to assure their survival in the midst of so much want. All this for the sake of their love of God, the source of their hope.

Those four sisters, in death, explained the reason for their hope. Those who continue to minister and plod on proclaim, in their uncertain and insecure lives, that the reason for their hope is the One who promised: "I will not leave you orphans".

My dear friends in times of crisis, confusion and anxiety, we need to hold on to God's promises to us. Because it is through these promises that we can continue to become living witnesses of God's love in our chaotic world today. As Jesus reminded us today, "Whoever loves me will be loved by my Father, and I will love him and reveal myself to him".

Amen