

Homily  
Memorial of the Seven Founders of the Order of Servites, religious  
February 17, 2023

One in four Americans fear being cancelled. Nearly half admit to keeping quiet or holding back for fear of reprisal. I attended a festive gathering several years ago, an annual event established by a friend and brother deacon north of the river. At this event, a comedian asked those in attendance who supported same sex marriage. Many in the crowd roared in agreement. Many, including me, quietly looked around as if to say, “No, I disagree, but I’m afraid of saying so in public.” I have caught myself, especially at work, holding my tongue so not to offend a coworker. HR training videos, required viewing, support diversity, inclusion, preferred pronoun use. These are crazy times. It seems secularism is protected while faith in God is scorned and ridiculed. In some cases, legal action can limit how we express ourselves.

The Apostles followed Jesus, knowing they were giving up everything on this earth, often questioning the sanity of their decision. Jesus assures them their reward will be great in heaven, “Everyone who has given up (all earthly attachments) for the sake of my name will receive a hundred times more, and will inherit eternal life.” Sounds like a great leap of faith to give up what is right in front of us for a much greater, but unknown, reward.

That’s what the Seven Founders of the Order of Servites did. They were noble, wealthy, close to their families. Some were married; some had children. Each had a lot to give up, yet that’s exactly what they did. Florence, Italy, in the mid-thirteenth century, was bustling and thriving, but struggling politically and socially. Sound familiar? These men chose a hard path, led by our Blessed Mother and supported by their bishop. They became examples of humility and austerity, focused on God and service to Mary. They escaped the lust of money and power, withdrawing from the hustle and bustle of society, banding together to beg and pray. Do we have that kind of faith? Do we have that kind of courage?

Not all of us are called to a life of poverty, forsaking all worldly allurements, but we are certainly called to make God our focus, to embrace God’s command to love Him and love on another. It’s easy to come to Mass, proclaim our faith, receive the gifts of God’s Son, in Word and Sacrament. It’s easy for me to stand here and proclaim and preach. But it’s not so easy for me to go out there and do the same. It scares me because I have a wife and children and grandchildren and a mortgage and car payments. And I like coming to a home that is comfortable with a well-stocked pantry and fridge.

It takes courage and strength to stand up for what is right. It takes faith to believe God will protect us and provide for us in this world and the next. It takes confidence to stand up to today’s secular society and say, “No, I do not accept this. I accept God.” May God bless us and send His Spirit to protect and guide us so that, one day, we may receive the reward He has in store for us.