

Homily
Memorial of Saint Stephen of Hungary
August 16, 2024

Who remembers Y2K? The whole world was in a mild panic believing that the end was nigh. My sister, married with six kids, was well prepared, with 6-months' worth of food and supplies in their basement bunker. I jokingly said, "If the worst happens, I can always come and live with you." She responded, with no sense of humor, "No, you will not."

People take survival very seriously. We don't know when the end will come, and our Lord even tells us that we won't know until it happens. And when it comes, there's nothing we can do about it. Yet many people stress about the end of their time. We don't like talking about our pending deaths. Benjamin Franklin famously said in reference to the newly established US Constitution being durable, "Nothing is certain except death and taxes." We can be also certain of this, we won't get out of life alive, and we can't take anything with us. But we can store up treasures in heaven. How do we do this? We align our will to God's Will. We take the gifts God has given us and make the most out of them. We love God and love our neighbor in all we say, do and feel. We do what we enjoy for the betterment of all around us, building up the kingdom of God.

The stewards were entrusted with a variety of talents, five, two and one. Two of the stewards applied those talents and made more. When we apply our talents, when we invest, when we share, when we love with our whole selves, we grow; this is building up the kingdom of God. One of the stewards buried his talent. When we don't share our gifts, when we sit and do nothing, when we apply our talents for selfish purposes, we are tearing down the kingdom of God. We can only grow when we share our talents.

St. Stephen of Hungary shared his talents. Vajk was born of a Christian mother, Sarolt and a pagan Grand Prince of the Hungarians, Geza. Geza was baptized, but still participated in his pagan practices. According to one tradition, when Vajk was born, his mother had a vision of the biblical Saint Stephen, the first martyr, who told her that she would bear a son who would continue the missionary work she and her husband had begun and abolish paganism throughout their land. When Vajk was Baptized, he was given the name Stephen. By the time Stephen was 15 years old, he and his father were spreading Christianity. When his father died, Stephen, at age 21, became Grand Prince. A few years later, around the turn of the second millennium, Stephen was crowned King of Hungary by Pope Sylvester II. This marked the transition from a tribal society to a Christian kingdom and strengthened King Stephen's power among his people.

King Stephen had a strong devotion to the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom he consecrated his kingdom. He always had his Lord in his mind and on his lips. He practiced his talents, sharing them and spreading the good news far and wide. He established a strong faith in the land that survived his death. Few kings have been canonized saints. He was canonized, along with his son, forty-five years after his death.

We are all born with God-given talents. How we use them is up to us. When we are finished using them is up to God. How are you using your talents?