

Homily: Reception into Marianist Novitiate by Fr. Mike Lisbeth, SM 8-13-10

Gospel Reading Matthew 16:24-28

Jesus said to his disciples, "Whoever wishes to come after me
must deny them self, take up their cross, and follow me.
For whoever wishes to save their life will lose it,
but \ whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.
What profit would there be for one to gain
the whole world and forfeit their life?
Or what can one give in exchange for their life?
For the Son of Man will come with his angels
in his Father's glory, and then he will repay
everyone according to their conduct.
Amen, I say to you, there are some standing here
who will not taste death until they see
the Son of Man coming in his kingdom."

Homily: Rite of Entrance to Novitiate Fr. Mike Lisbeth, SM 8-13-10

There was a small church community that decided to recognize the growth in virtue in members of its congregation. The first time the committee met, it seemed obvious to all that a certain man should be recognized for his humility. On the following Sunday during the church service, this man was presented with a medal to recognize his humility. But when the man wore the medal to church on the following Sunday, the committee took the medal back from him.

And in another place, word spread across the countryside about an old man, wise and holy, who had moved in to the small house atop the mountain. A person from the village decided to make the long and difficult journey to visit him, to learn from his wisdom and to receive a blessing from him. When he arrived at the house, he saw an old servant inside who greeted him at the door. "I would like to see the wise Holy Man," he said to the servant. The servant smiled and led him inside. As they walked through the house, the village visitor looked around the house, eagerly anticipating his encounter with the Holy Man.

Before he knew it, he had been led to the back door and escorted outside. He stopped and turned to the servant, "But I want to see the Holy Man!" "You already have," said the old man. "Everyone you meet in life, even if they appear plain and

insignificant, see each of them as a wise Holy Person. If you do this, then whatever problem you brought with you here today will be resolved."

This growing in virtue is a very tricky business. As I prayed and prepared for today, I imagined Bro. Frank Deibel, today 102 years old, as that Holy Man. Today as we celebrate your entrance into our family, we also recall the life and death of Jakob Gapp, whose holy life calls us to decide and choose: would you rather SEE the holy man, or would you rather BE the holy man?

I'm deeply impressed by the life-witness of Blessed Father Gapp. He is absolutely un-bending, un-compromising, un-yielding, when it comes to speaking and living gospel truth. Listen to these wise words of Blessed Father Gapp.

"Shepherds must remain with their people when danger threatens." -- Oct. 19, 1938

"Wherever I am, I would always like to be open and honest." -- April 22, 1939

"I know and I remind myself often: the most important thing is to be a religious person." 12-4-37

"...but I said to myself that it is my duty as a priest of the Catholic Church to teach the truth and to fight against error." -- January 27, 1943

"Friendship with God is always the most important thing." -- March 15, 1939

"Everything passes; only heaven remains." -- August 13, 1943

"If I did not have faith, I would not be able to guarantee my life." -- April 17, 1941

"Don't forget to pray! We need the Lord particularly at this time, when everything seems to be wavering." -- April 10, 1939

"Let us entrust everything to God. Nothing is more important than being one with God." - Dec 14, 1941

"A human being, particularly a child or a young person, cannot bear sadness for too long a time. It is similar to a rain that lasts very long, too long. It brings cold and frost, and it causes harm." -- May 20, 1939

"Action is more important than theory!"

Jakob lived 46 years, martyred 67 years ago on this very day. He was guillotined at 7:08 p.m., August 13, 1943. He said:

"I was convinced that it was my task to inform Catholics of errors, that the National Socialist ideology was incompatible with Christianity."

His remains were never released to family or brothers, but used for research at the Anatomical-Biological Institute of the University of Berlin. Those in power feared that, if released, Father Gapp's remains would be venerated by people of faith.

And so, to our youngest brothers, we hold up the holy life of Blessed Jakob. We challenge you to be like him, wise and holy. And we also dare to hold up our own lives

too. Our wisdom and holiness, like your own, is not yet perfected. But, we choose to be perfected by the power of God's Spirit, by the formative influence of the Blessed Virgin Mary.

This day is yet another opportunity for each of us to yield our life to the God who can do much more than we can ask or imagine. The ancient and mysterious challenge of the Gospel rings true for us again: "Take up your cross, and follow. If you wish to save your life, you will lose it, and if you lose your life for the sake of the gospel, you will surely find it." My brothers, may these words take on flesh and vitality in the living out of our commitment to Marianist life.

May the Father and the Son, and the Holy Spirit be glorified in all places, through the Immaculate Virgin Mary.