

22 Sunday B

August 29, 2021

St. Patrick

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Jesus' disciples broke the rules. They went against the rules about ritual purity which the chosen people were called to follow. In fact, earlier in St. Mark's Gospel, the religious leaders became angry with Jesus because, to them, *he* was also breaking the rules.

He was doing what was not lawful on the Sabbath day. Jesus was spending his time with the riffraff, folks who didn't have a good reputation. In fact, by the start of chapter 3 in St. Mark's Gospel, the religious leaders had already planned to destroy Jesus, to put him to death, because he disregarded the rules (3:7).

Jesus lashed out in today's Gospel: **“You abandon the commandment of God and hold to human tradition.”**

Jesus calls us instead to go deeply within, **“from the human heart,”** in his words; and from the heart, we're called to act.

Earlier in the month a parishioner reminded me about Franz Jagerstatter, and how he had died during the month of August. It was in 1943 that this Catholic lived truly **“from the human heart,”** true to his conscience. He was a regular guy in his mid-30s, with a wife and three children. He was a farmer in a small town of Austria.

Yes, Jagerstatter was a layperson just like so many of you, and as a young adult, his Catholic faith came strongly alive within him. Five years earlier, in 1938, Hitler invaded Austria and annexed it to his growing empire. It was later put to vote, and the people of Austria ratified the annexation. In Jagerstatter's small town, everyone in the town voted in favor—except for one, Jagerstatter himself.

In his conscience he couldn't give his approval to the Nazi cause, and its horrific extermination of Jews, and others.

In 1943 Jagerstatter got his induction notice for Hitler's army. He couldn't do it. He went to his parish priest and the local bishop. They both told him he needed to obey. His wife and neighbors tried to persuade him to join Hitler's army.

He was all alone. After voicing his refusal to serve in Hitler's army, Jagerstatter was imprisoned and, five months later, beheaded as an "enemy of the state." As he put it, "Not everything which this world considers a crime is a crime in the eyes of God" (1).

Indeed, Pope Francis put it wisely, "So we also [like Jesus] must learn to listen more to our conscience. Be careful, however: this does not mean we ought to follow our ego, do whatever interests us, whatever suits us, whatever pleases us. That is not conscience. Conscience is the interior space in which we can listen to and hear the truth, the good, the voice of God" (2).

It's not just keeping the rules. Friends, it's "**from the human heart**" that we search for God's will, and pray to be faithful to our conscience. Franz Jaggerstatter went against the tide, and stayed true to his conscience. In these very hard times, by grace may we remain true to our conscience.

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- (1) Quoted by Robert Ellsberg, in *All Saints: Daily Reflections on Saints, Prophets, and Witnesses for Our Time* (New York: The Crossword Publishing Company, 2001), pp. 341-43, at 342.
- (2) Pope Francis, his "Angelus" Address of June 30, 2013.

*General Intercessions*

*August 29, 2021*

*22<sup>nd</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time*

**You call your Church to holiness: strengthen all the baptized to embrace the Gospel, and live it “from the heart” into action; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You call us to praise: sing in the hearts of all, and let our prayer reach to the ends of the earth; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You call us to justice: give hope to the Afghans and to the people of Haiti in their suffering; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You call us to solidarity: inspire all of us to show care in safeguarding others from the Delta variant; and give healing to all who suffer from the pandemic; we pray to you, O Lord—**

**You call us to be of support: give relief to those in the path of Hurricane Ida, and to those suffering from the flooding in Waverly and Middle Tennessee; we pray to you, O Lord--**

**You call us to eternal life: give blessed assurance to all who have died, especially the 13 U.S. troops and nearly 200 others killed in the Kabul attack (*and for the 5:15 p.m. Mass only--*) and for Tiffany Berretta on the 14<sup>th</sup> anniversary of her death; we pray to you, O Lord--**

