

August 14, 2022 Fr. John's Homily for the 20th Sunday in Ordinary Time

JMJ CHS

I was "YouTubing" again the other day and ran across an old Bluegrass song that I was familiar with. It's called *I'll Fly Away*, sung by Alison Krauss and Gillian Welch. They played guitar and mandolin and engaged in some beautiful harmonies.

It was kind of a sad song about looking forward to death. Here are some of the lyrics.

*Some glad morning when this life is over*

*I'll fly away*

*To a home on God's celestial shore*

*I'll fly away*

*I'll fly away, oh, Glory*

*I'll fly away*

*When I die, Hallelujah, by and by*

*I'll fly away*

In the second stanza it goes on to talk about '*just a few more weary days*' until....

Not very upbeat.

The words of the song reminded me of one of the Psalms, # 55, which said, "Oh, that I had wings like a dove, I would fly away and be at rest."

In both cases it seems like the author was kind of depressed and complaining that life sure can be wearisome and that at some point in time, you just wanna say *I've had enough. Get me out of here.* And I am sure it is true for all of us. Young or old, male and female, parents, their children, teachers, principals, police officers, politicians, and yes, even pastors.

On its lowest, most basic level, it could simply mean, 'I need a vacation.' Or, 'I really think I want to leave my job and retire.' But then it can get much more serious. I want to leave my marriage, or worse, I want to leave my family. I want to leave this world. I want to..... fly away. And as we know, sadly, there are some people who have taken a proactive approach in leaving this world. They have taken their lives. Their wounds are too deep and festering. Physical, emotional, and spiritual wounds inflicted on our lives can take a toll.

Our Gospel today speaks about a situation that has caused a lot of heartbreak in our society. Divided families; and hearts are broken. Moms and dads are against their children and children are against their parents. And it doesn't stop there. Despite the fact that there have always been differences between the young and the old, in these times there are now cultural, political and spiritual reasons as well. Parents raise their children in the faith and watch those children leave, sucked into the ways of the world. Captured by the culture. Brainwashed. And now, in some cases we hear of those who have left their gender behind.

And part of the mystery is there at the beginning of the Gospel. Jesus said that He has come into the world for a particular purpose. He wants to shake things up. He wants to light a fire. And He says that He has not come into the world to bring peace, but a sword. What is He saying? I thought He was the Prince of Peace. There must be another way of interpreting this. I can't

believe that God wants division. Maybe He just means that as a natural result of His coming into the world, there will necessarily be division.

Maybe you have noticed this scenario play out in *The Chosen*. Jesus says He's a *revolutionary*. He's going to "shake things up", make some *trouble*. He wants to "*stir up the waters*". He says to his startled apostles, "*Get used to different.*" And He says that not everybody will be able to accept His message. Well that's pretty obvious – look what they did to Him. They sought to put an end to His revolutionary ideas.

And so it has been, throughout the ages. There has indeed been division and it has caused lots and lots of problems. But it just seems so apparent in our times. Maybe that's one of the signs of the times he told us to be watching for.

So yes, there are many broken hearts out there. Many are frustrated, and confused about the state of the world and would really like to..... fly away. Seriously. Some will just write sad songs about those feelings, but others will give up and check out.

But for those of you who decide to stay and tough it out, let's try to offer some words of hope for the future. One sign of hope, again, is *The Chosen*. There are five more seasons to complete. And as I said recently, I can believe that the Gospel will be preached, through this TV show, and be seen by unlimited numbers of people throughout the world, changing hearts and forcing people to make that decision, yes or no, I will obey or I will not obey. I will believe or I will not believe, I will serve or I will not serve. I think that's literally part of God's plan and it can be exciting.

Fr. John Riccardo is a priest of the *Archdiocese of Detroit* and has also got some hopeful words for us. He has a presentation that may soon be coming to a parish near you. It's about being rescued. I have certainly pushed that idea in some of my homilies. I believe that God is coming to rescue us, from ourselves.

And several of you have recently pointed out that the two Fr. John's, me and Fr. Ricardo, are fans of St. Joan of Arc. I wrote a little about her in last week's bulletin article. Well, apparently that other Fr. John did as well. We both talked about that new book about St. Joan as our coach in life. One quote that Fr. Riccardo likes to use about St. Joan is that she once said at her trial, "I am not afraid, God is with me. I was born for this." And Fr. Riccardo suggested the same can be true for all of us. Can we possibly have that same attitude? Can we be excited to be a part of this time in history? OK, whatever you say Fr. John. I look forward to hearing your presentation. Maybe you can persuade us that we could somehow find joy in suffering.

Last week, because we chose to honor God the Father on his unofficial feast day, we did not preach on the Gospel. Remember, it was about being prepared. Keep your lamps trimmed and filled with oil because you don't know the day or the hour when the bridegroom will come or when the Son of Man will appear so be prepared.

The odds are that it will be our own death. Or it could be the second coming of Jesus. How should we prepare? Well I have talked about it ... but today (this weekend) we are going to get a little proactive. After the Saturday Mass we had what I have called *The Holy Spirit Prepper's Seminar* and we got serious. The first meeting, and, I think we'll continue to meet. Lots of ground to cover. We will keep you posted as to the next meeting date.

+Fr. J