

“Persecution, Truth, Love, and Joy”

On the heels of Stephen’s martyrdom, in today’s readings we see that all pretense is gone as the fledgling Church is now openly and violently persecuted. As families were dragged from homes and imprisoned, this attempted destruction of the Church caused early Christians to leave Jerusalem and be *“scattered throughout the countryside of Judea and Samaria.”*

But you cannot snuff out Truth; you cannot snuff out Love -- *“those who had been scattered went about preaching the word.”* One of them, another early deacon, “Philip the Evangelist” went to the city of



Samaria. This is significant in that racial and religious tension between the Samaritans and Jews went back several centuries. But the Good News of God is not limited by human identity politics. Casting out demons of *“many possessed people,”* curing *“many paralyzed and crippled,”* his proclamation of Christ *“brought great joy in that city.”*

Over the centuries and millennia, the Church and its proclamation of the Gospel has always been under assault. Taking various forms,

playing both the long game and short game, some obvious and some subtle, some from the outside and some from within... Satan is always at work seeking first and foremost to undermine Christ; but by extension to distort and corrupt and otherwise disfigure His Church, His teachings, the priesthood, the Sacraments, family, etc. These assaults are often successful in generating fear and shame and even death. But you cannot snuff out Truth; you cannot snuff out Love!

Even in the midst of an ongoing pandemic that closes church doors and suppresses access to the Sacraments, new and creative ways of evangelizing naturally spring forth, now finding open ears in those usually hostile to Christianity. Yes, the Good News proclaimed by Christ in today’s Gospel will endure forever: *“For this is the will of my Father, that everyone who sees the Son and believes in him may have eternal life, and I shall raise him on the last day.”*

In times of great tribulation we do well to remember: despite Satan’s greatest and ongoing efforts, his head has already been crushed! Battles rage on, but the war has already been won thru our Savior Jesus Christ in His great Passion and Resurrection! It is with this indomitable Truth in our hearts that we sing the words of today’s Responsorial Psalm: *“Let all the earth cry out to God with joy!”*

Peace,

Dcn Ron

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<http://usccb.org/bible/readings/042920.cfm>