

Jesus said, “Go and proclaim the Kingdom of God” (Luke 9:60b). In the Gospel, Jesus gives several examples of people who say they want to follow Jesus but put him in second place and don’t follow through. ‘After I take care of other things, than I will follow you.’ It is helpful to study the lives of the saints. We see their initial failures, and then a fire of faith is lit, and they are able to focus keenly in order to follow the Lord. October 23<sup>rd</sup> is the Memorial of Saint John of Capistrano.

Some say, ‘No good deed goes unpunished.’ John of Capistrano was a well-educated man who advanced quickly in early life. At the age of 26, he was the local governor of Perugia in Italy. In a battle against a powerful enemy, he tried to broker a peace. Instead, he wound up as a prisoner of war.

Some say, ‘When one door closes, another opens.’ In prison, John of Capistrano had a vision that gave him a focus and purpose to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. St. Francis of Assisi came to him in a dream and he experienced a profound conversion. From that point forward he resolved to embrace poverty, chastity, and obedience as a Franciscan. Eventually released from prison, he followed through on his mystical experience and joined the Franciscans of Perugia. He studied diligently and applied himself to this new prayerful way of life. Four years later he was ordained a Franciscan priest.<sup>i ii</sup>

Saint Francis said, ‘Preach the Gospel at all times, if necessary, use words.’ John of Capistrano was a powerful preacher. After one inspired sermon, over 100 university students entered the Franciscan Order. They got it. They dropped everything to go and proclaim the Kingdom of God. John of Capistrano “also won many converts from among the Jews in eastern Europe. He spent long hours in the confessional and promoted works of charity” among the laity committed to the Franciscan way.<sup>iii</sup>

The Office of Readings offers an excerpt from St. John’s exhortation, *Mirror of the Clergy*. In it, he focuses on the role of a preacher. “Those who labor in preaching and teaching... have been placed here to care for others. Their own lives should be an example to others, showing how they must live in the house of the Lord.”

Some say, ‘If at first you don’t succeed, try and try again.’ Although he wound up as a prisoner of war early in life, as a Franciscan he helped to foster peace in many situations. He helped to rally the troops in the siege of Belgrade. In addition to his own prayers, he urged 4,000 soldiers to invoke the name of Jesus. The enemy withdrew from the city and it was spared from destruction. John trusted the vision he had seen, and it proved to be prophetic. Additionally, he traveled far and wide, often at the behest of the pope to sow seeds of peace among nations and even within the Franciscan order.

Pope John Paul II said, ‘Be not afraid.’ We celebrated his feast day on the 22<sup>nd</sup> of October, one day before the feast of Saint John of Capistrano. In a general audience the late pope invoked the saint to inspire the young, the sick, and the newly married.

St John of Capistrano ... gave himself with great generosity for the salvation of souls. May his glorious evangelical witness sustain you, dear young people, in your dedication to daily fidelity to Christ; may it encourage you, dear sick persons, to follow Christ on the path of trial and suffering; may it help you, dear newly-weds, to make of your home the place for the living meeting with the love of God and of your neighbor.<sup>iv</sup>

“Be not afraid.” Many things can hold us back in life if we give into fear. God can transform us if we give him a chance. He can turn any failure, or fault, or fear into victory. The cross is our prime example. Sin and death were conquered. So, let us not fear to invoke the name of Jesus as Saint John of Capistrano did, that we too might give strength to others when times are difficult and challenging.

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<sup>i</sup> catholicfaithpatronsaints.com/prayers-quips-and-quotes-st-john-capistrano-feast-day-october-23/

<sup>ii</sup> catholicnewsagency.com/saint/st-john-of-capistrano-633

<sup>iii</sup> ewtn.com/catholicism/library/st-john-of-capistrano-5576

<sup>iv</sup> vatican.va/content/john-paul-ii/en/audiences/2002/documents/hf\_jp-ii\_aud\_20021023.html