
9 Monday

MONDAY, 3rd Week of EASTER

Acts 6: 8 - 15
Ps 118: 23-24, 26-27, 29-30
John 6: 22 - 29

Stephen, a man “filled with faith and the Holy Spirit”, was one of that small group chosen by the earliest Christian community to serve that community’s day-to-day material needs. He quickly became also the first documented Christian martyr, whose story we hear these few days in the first readings at Mass.

Evidently Stephen was very effective, successful in his ministry, and well-liked, made a good impression on people. In his story in the Acts of the Apostles there’s no indication of any reason why he was murdered. Jealousy because of the wisdom with which he spoke ? Annoyance of people who couldn’t accept what he was saying ? Our human tendency to oppose, dislike or even want to get rid of someone whose very life is so wholesome, good and inspiring..... and thus a reproach to us ?

It’s always been easy to attack a person’s good name or reputation, spread rumours and fears, make false accusations. Good ordinary people can be turned into prejudiced fanatics. In modern times propaganda is an art used by people with power, whether in business and economics, government and politics, media of all kinds. And Stephen’s story is multiplied every day. People are uncomfortable seeing “a face like the face of an angel”.

Mindful of Stephen’s martyrdom, and its approval by a young fanatic named Saul (who later became St Paul) shouldn’t we Christians be extra careful not to fall prey to the stirring up of hatreds, and become more aware of the destructive and oppressive forces that try to make us conform to values that are not those of our Risen Lord.