

St James News: Thought for the day – Wednesday 21st October 2020

Who is a Martyr? – Rev John Ohen

Who is a “MARTYR?”

The dictionary describe “a martyr as someone who suffers persecution and death for advocating, renouncing, refusing to renounce, or refusing to advocate a religious belief or cause as demanded by external party”.

Martyrdom is the supreme witness to the truth about our faith. The courage of the martyrs is rooted in the knowledge of God’s love.

The martyrs know very well that, every hair in our head is accounted for. They also know that they are created in God’s image.

We as Christians share in this knowledge and it is this revelation which gives us courage and the strength to witness to God as our creator.

In Luke 12: 1 – 7, Jesus calls us to follow him and be prepared to die to self. In doing so we will rise with him on the last day.

Jesus also expected that those who will follow him, would be persecuted, and suffer martyrdom. The martyrs of every age embraced this teaching and put into practice even if it meant facing physical death. The Martyrs were not afraid of those who kill the body or the flesh. They feared God more than men and were prepared to face death as when it comes.

One of the earliest theologians “Tertullian, said that “the blood of the martyrs is the seed of the church.” It is a mystery that the church has been going on all these years without major disruption regardless of what is going on in the rest of the world.

The big question is: are we prepared to die as a martyr? Majority of us will say “No” because nobody chooses martyrdom deliberately. However, all Christians by the example of their lives and witness of their word, have an obligation to manifest the new creation which they have put on in Baptism and strengthened at Confirmation by the power of the Holy Spirit. We are all called to be ambassadors of Jesus Christ and some of us may come against obstacle, minor or major, but we must carry our cross and look up to Jesus the author and perfecter of our faith. The Holy Sprit will give us the strength to carry on if we ask for it. So let us turn to Christ and make him known.