

August 29, 2008
Friday of the Twenty-First Week in Ordinary Time
Memorial of the Martyrdom of Saint John the Baptist

Readings of the day may be found on the following link:

<http://www.nccbuscc.org/nab>

1 Corinthians 1:17-25

Psalms 33:1-2, 4-5, 10-11

Mark 6:17-29

John had said to Herod, "It is not lawful for you to have your brother's wife." Herodias harbored a grudge against him and wanted to kill him but was unable to do so.

I imagine that John knew how much Herod hated him. Most of us are able to pick up on the non-verbal signals and the tension in the air when we are around people who do not like us. Yet, John remains true to his beliefs and takes a stand against Herod's behavior even in the face of possible retaliation. In this case it led to his physical death. In our case it could lead to a death of friendships, of work we love, or of our position in the community. I am not sure why, but I find myself amazed whenever I encounter someone who has the courage to speak the truth in the face of strong opposition. There are particular people whom I have in mind, and hold dear in my heart, who have this kind of courage. They frequently encounter criticism, and often take great risks in speaking out about the truth. They are a prophetic voice in our world today. Some are religious leaders and some are lay leaders who work in a variety of professions. John was a prophetic voice in his day. I have not publicly been put in the same position as John, but I know that there are times that I fail to speak the truth in fear of the consequences, even when the consequences are minor. At those time times, I just don't want to deal with the fallout, however minor. I am grateful for the people who do speak up. Not because someone has to do it, but because they hold up a beacon for me to look at my behaviors and choices. Every time I read the column of a particular journalist or read an article by a particular religious leader, I say a prayer of gratitude and promise myself I will write them to express my thanks. But the real grace of their presence is that their courage makes me uncomfortable. It disturbs my peace. It calls me to look deeply into my heart, my attitudes, my beliefs, my behaviors, and my choices. Their choices and actions make me want to do more and be more. John is a beacon of light for me in my darkness and so are they.

Even a coward can praise Christ, but it takes a man of courage to follow him. ~Anonymous

Who calls you to greater integrity and to what are you being called to change?