

Fraternus Accolade Mass – Wednesday of the Third Week of Easter, Year I – May 8, 2019
Cathedral of St. Paul, Birmingham, Alabama – 6:00pm – Fr. Bryan Jerabek – 575 words

A persecution broke out in the early Church – so the first reading said – and all were scattered. All *except* the Apostles. But what about us? Would we stand by Christ and his Church in a time of trial also, or would we be among the many who were scattered?

The video clip that we watched last week¹ was a good illustration of this. The Cardinal and his priests manfully resisted flight and thought first of Christ in the Blessed Sacrament and ensuring that He was safe; good young Catholics in the crowd stood and courageously sang God’s praises as the enemy encroached.

We want to be among those who would stand by Christ. But where can we get that kind of fortitude? We can hope to be a hero in a moment of extreme testing. But we are made to be heroes each day. Each one of us is called to heroic virtue, and that is not only for adrenaline moments, but even for ordinary daily life.

That Cardinal and those priests in the movie, who thought first about the Eucharist before running for their lives – they practiced for that daily by bowing down before the Lord in reverence. By meditating before him. By celebrating the sacraments devoutly. By not being shallow men, but reflecting deeply upon the mysteries they handled.

And those young Catholics who courageously sang Alleluia while the Nazi youth aggressively advanced – they had their own formation, that also included encountering Christ in the sacraments. Making worthy communions and regular confessions. Praying for their country, praying for themselves. They knew the One by whom they stood.

This reflection is good for us as we approach the summer break. Will what we have learned and did this year in Fraternus continue through the summer? Will you say your prayers and focus on growing in virtue? Will you go to confession even when there is not the convenience of having a priest waiting for you on Wednesday night?

I especially want to encourage you young men who can now drive: will you use that gift only for chores, for work, and for fun? Or will you find a way to go to adoration or some daily Masses also? None of us can hope to turn on the kind of strength that we will need when our own trials come, unless we do the things necessary to gain that strength now.

“My heart is ready, O God” – but is my heart “steady”? This is the present test for us. It’s easy when we can come on Wednesdays and grow together. The proof is in the summer vacation: whether I pick up my Combat Rosary and say it; whether I pray for my Fraternus brothers; whether I frequent the sacraments and strive for virtue.

So, what is your plan for this summer? Yes, a plan for school vacation is one of the components of being ready for the supreme test. Ordinary, daily life is where the rubber hits the road and true heroes are formed. Movies don’t show us much about that part because it’s just not as exciting of a story. But that part is crucial.

Let our hearts be ready – and also steady. Christ said in the gospel he will not lose anything the Father has given him. We have to do our part to remain firmly in his grip daily, by cooperating with his grace and doing the things that Christian men do.

¹ This YouTube clip substantially captures what we watched: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=v-CxHsaFb9M>