

Fourth Sunday of Easter: Washing Our Robes White in Blood

They washed their robes white in the blood of the Lamb.

Frank was an everyday, white collar worker, trying to make it in the business world. He wanted to provide the best for his family. And he could have done so much better, but he was usually passed over when it came time for promotions. You see, in the eyes of his companion workers, the other guys in particular, Frank was not a team player. Why? Because he did not join in with the other guys on some of their activities during business trips. What would happen is this: after a long day of boring meetings, or presentations that seemed to fall flat, the guys would meet in the hotel bar for a few drinks. Nothing wrong with that. Frank would join in. He'd also be with them when they went to a restaurant for dinner. All is still good. But then, sometimes, more often than not, the guys would go prowling for women. It might be bar hopping, or it might be going to a strip club. Frank wouldn't join them. He'd go to his room after dinner. He'd check in with his wife, Sally, see how her day was going. Even if he and Sally were not at their best with each other, maybe they had words the night before or that morning, still Frank always called and Sally knew she was loved. Now you would think that Frank's behavior on business trips would have no bearing on his job, but it did. You see, most of the time one or two of the guys held a position over Frank. His boss might be one of them, or, maybe, his boss' boss. These guys would be irritated that Frank was not there. Some of his friends even told him that he needed to join with them. They told him that he needed to go along, play the game, make believe he was having a good time, if need be. But Frank was not going to get into that stuff. Now he knew there was a possibility that his absence at these excursions into the dark might be in the minds of his bosses when a promotion was being considered, but Frank had a choice to make. He just would not go along. So he did not get the best promotions, or many for that matter. Frank washed his robe white in the Blood of the Lamb. He sacrificed going along with the guys, not joining them in their fun, and he was bloodied for it. But Frank loved Sally, and more than that, he loved the Lord. His robe was white, washed in the blood of the lamb.

Now Sally pretty much faced the same situation, or at least one similar to Frank's. Sally's problem did not involve her work. All was OK there, it involved other girls. Sally needed female friends, and Frank was perfectly understanding that she needed to go out an evening a week to be with other women. Sally looked for a hobby of some sort that would involve others. And she found a group that met her needs. She joined a group of quilters. She enjoyed the quilting, but more than that, she enjoyed being with a bunch of ladies, mostly her own age, and talking, and talking, and telling stories, and talking and laughing and talking. She needed this and loved going. At least for the first six months. That's when Madeline joined the group. Madeline evidently had some issues both at home and outside her home. She would talk about her husband, or about this or that other person. In a short time all the girls were talking about their husbands, or about some other girl that was not there. The gossip became outright malicious. Sally knew this was wrong, but she really wanted to be with the other girls. Finally, after a particular evening when the conversation became outright

vicious, Sally decided to quit the group. She really missed her girl time, but she did not want to be drawn into all this negativity. She knew this was wrong, very wrong. So, she stopped going. And it hurt. She got bloodied, because, of course, she knew they all would be talking about her. Sally kept her integrity. She washed her robe white in the blood of the Lamb.

We all have to do this. We all have to wash out robes white in the blood of the Lamb. Sure, we would like a religion that was not demanding, one that would not effect our personal lives. But then we really would not be “tied to God,” as the word religion is defined etymologically. Nor would we be allowing the Good Shepherd to protect us from the lure of evil. Folks, and I speak particularly to myself here, when are we going to realize that there is a cost to discipleship? When are we going to realize that if we are sincere in our desire to follow Christ, it is going to cost us? We will be bloodied. We will all have to wash our robes white in the blood of the Lamb.

Most likely we will not have our lives threatened if we refuse to renounce our Christianity. We will not be burned to death like Lawrence or Polycarp, we will not be thrown to the wild beasts like Ignatius of Antioch or Perpetua and Felicity. We will not have our heads severed like Thomas More or those sixteen Carmelite nuns killed during the reign of terror in France. But there is a high probability, 100% in fact, that every single one of us, every person here, has had to or will have to choose to live the Way of the Lord, the New Way, will have to choose to believe that there is more than the here and now, and will have to sacrifice present pleasure for eternal gain. Every single one of us will have to choose to be bloodied, to feel hurt of some sort, because we are committed to following Jesus Christ. Every single one of us must choose to wash our robes white in the Blood of the Lamb.

May we have the courage to be Catholic.