

Saint John Stone

October 25, 2006

Eph 4:1-5, 14-16

Mt 16:13-19

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Being Steadfast in Faith, Hope and Love

Have you ever met and talked to someone, as an acquaintance, forget about this person and then see him or her again on another occasion? These are common human encounters. During my pastoral experience last year at Villanova Preparatory School in Ojai, California, I met a grandmother of one of my students during Welcome Back-To-School Week and we shared greetings and a short conversation. After a long period of time, I met her again, this time in a hospital where she was recovering from illness. I said to myself, “Oh no, that’s what’s her name? My goodness, I forgot her name. Oh, it’s Mary, Michael’s grandmother.” So I ended up visiting her and talking to her. What happened during our short meeting were opportunities to love, to show mercy and compassion and to practice charity. However, the point is that we knew very little of each other. I don’t know much about her family (aside from her grandson who goes to Villanova Prep) and her background. Nor do I need to know these details and that’s OK.

Take note of today’s Gospel according to St. Matthew, how Simon Peter and Jesus knew each other. Simon Peter didn’t say to Jesus, “You are my teacher, my friend.” He said, “*You are the Messiah, the Son of the living God.*” And Jesus didn’t say to Simon Peter, “You are my disciple, my helper in ministry.” Jesus said, “*You are Peter, and upon this rock I will build my church...*” This was more than friendly or

personal acknowledgment. It was actually prophetic; they both knew the future, God's will and the coming of God's kingdom. Jesus and Peter knew each other through faith, hope and love.

Our Augustinian brother whom we remember today, John Stone, also knew God and God's presence in his life. John knew God's will and the coming of God's kingdom. On the third of November, 1535, the English Parliament issued the Act of Supremacy, declaring King Henry VIII supreme head of the Church in England and John refused to recognize this in writing. He was the only one in his community and monastery of Austin Friars who refused to do this. The rest of his Augustinian brothers signed that document, acknowledging this Act of Supremacy. The friaries of the Franciscans and the Dominicans were closed and surrendered to the English government without difficulty.

But not John; he was stubborn but firm in his faith. He asserted that the king could not be the head of the church, that this title and office are reserved for the pope, the spiritual father appointed by God. John was therefore imprisoned for a year in the Tower of London where he remained adamant. During his imprisonment, after praying and fasting for days, he had a vision that he was to receive the crown of martyrdom in Canterbury and he also heard a voice that told him to hold on to his beliefs and faith. He was not to be afraid and not to give in to persuasion and terror.

On October 1539, he was tried in Canterbury and on the sixth of December of that same year he was sentenced to death. Within several weeks, on the 27th of December, two days after Christmas, he was hanged, drawn and quartered. Because he was a traitor to the king, his head and quartered body were displayed at the city gates. He suffered and died out of love for our Augustinian Order, love for God and love for the Church.

We know God through Jesus Christ in this Eucharist we are about to receive. We are united to St. John Stone and all our Augustinian sisters and brothers in this Eucharist. We ask for the intercessions of St. John, that we may always be faithful to our religious vocations, to our Augustinian Order, to God and his Church and that we may always be steadfast in our faith, hope and love.