The 22nd Sunday of Ordinary Time

Today is Saturday the 29 and Sunday the 30 August, beginning the 22nd week of Ordinary Time.

Timbre, with Bifrost Arts Music, sings Agnus Dei.

Today’s reading is from the Gospel of Mark.

Mark 6:17-29

For Herod himself had sent men who arrested John, bound him, & put him in prison on account of Herodias, his brother Philip’s wife, because Herod had married her. For John had been telling Herod, ‘It is not lawful for you to have your brother’s wife.’ & Herodias had a grudge against him, & wanted to kill him. But she could not, for Herod feared John, knowing that he was a righteous & holy man, & he protected him. When he heard him, he was greatly perplexed; & yet he liked to listen to him. But an opportunity came when Herod on his birthday gave a banquet for his courtiers & officers & for the leaders of Galilee. When his daughter came in & danced, she pleased Herod & his guests; & the king said to the girl, ‘Ask me for whatever you wish, & I will give it.’ And he solemnly swore to her, ‘Whatever you ask me, I will give you, even half of my kingdom.’ She went out & said to her mother, ‘What should I ask for?’ She replied, ‘The head of John the baptizer.’ Immediately she rushed back to the king & requested, ‘I want you to give me at once the head of John the Baptist on a platter.’ The king was deeply grieved; yet out of regard for his oaths & for the guests, he did not want to refuse her. Immediately the king sent a soldier of the guard with orders to bring John’s head. He went & beheaded him in the prison, brought his head on a platter, & gave it to the girl. Then the girl gave it to her mother. When his disciples heard about it, they came & took his body, & laid it in a tomb.

Our Gospel reading for this weekend, we listen to the account of the circumstances surrounding the death of John the Baptist. The evangelist Mark sandwiches the account of John’s death between the sending out of the Twelve and their subsequent return. In doing this, what do you think Mark might be hinting at?

Herod orders the execution of John in spite of his affection for him, in spite of his deep distress. Herod is more concerned with his honour and pleasing his family. Are there times when I am like Herod? Are there times when I am afraid to lose face or afraid of what others may think of me? Am I at times like Herodias, harbouring a grudge against someone who said something I did not like? Have there been times when I have spoken out like John the Baptist? In what ways has your following of Jesus been at a price?

Can you sense the inner turmoil and distress that Herod feels as you listen to the reading again?
What would you like to say to the Lord in response to this reading today?

Glory be to the Father and to the Son and to the Holy Spirit. As it was in the beginning, is now and ever shall be, world without end. Amen.