



Scripture Nugget: Speaking the truth with love and courage

Now Herod had arrested John, bound [him], and put him in prison on account of Herodias, the wife of his brother Philip, for John had said to him, "It is not lawful for you to have her." Although he wanted to kill him, he feared the people, for they regarded him as a prophet (Matthew 14:3-5).

John the Baptist was imprisoned by Herod, the tetrarch because he told the king it was immoral for him to take his sister-in-law for his wife. Apparently, her husband was still alive. John knew that in the eyes of God, it was an unlawful marriage and adultery. John had the courage to tell Herod of his wrong doing. Because of this, Herodias harbored a grudge against John. An opportune time came for her to have John beheaded when on Herod's birthday, Herodias' daughter performed a dance for Herod and his guests and delighted him so much he promised to give her anything. Instigated by her mother, Herodias' daughter asked for the head of John. Although Herod was distressed about this, he did not wish to go back on his word in front of his guests and promptly carried out her request.

John the Baptist gave up his life to witness to the truth that the marital bond is established by God, and is indissoluble if the man and woman are consenting and of sound mind. It is an important truth that seals marriages and protects families which are the unit of the human society. Jesus teaches us: *"Therefore, what God has joined together, no human being must separate."* (Matthew 19:6). It was important that King Herod be told of his wrong doing. As king and leader of his people, he has the moral duty to be a good example to his people; instead, however, he caused a scandal. As a further testament to his weak character and pride, he was unable to retract his bad promise to Herodias' daughter when he knew that by carrying out his promise, he would be causing a grave injustice. Flaws and weaknesses of character, if not controlled and overcome, open the door to sin which breeds further sins.

Grudges and hatred in the heart provide an open door for more evil to enter the heart. Herodias was unable to forgive John even though she knew in her heart John was speaking the truth out of love for her and Herod. She was just bent on revenge. When the opportunity came for her to exact revenge, she never hesitated. In instigating her daughter to ask for the head of John the Baptist, she pulled her own daughter into evil and sin when she should have been a good guide for her young child. Giving free rein to her hatred, Herodias had blindly provided herself and her daughter to be agents of evil.

Conversation with Jesus: Precious Lord, You said to Your disciples: *"If you remain in My Word, you will truly be My disciples, and you will know the truth, and the truth will set you free (John 8:31-32).* The Truth will set me free from deception, falsehoods, injustice, sin and eternal damnation. Your Word is truth (cf. John 17:17). You are the Way, the Truth and the Life (cf. John 14:6). Give me the courage of St John the Baptist to witness steadfastly to the truth with love even in the face of adversity. Mary, Mother of Salvation, pray for me. Thank You, Jesus. Praise You, Jesus. www.twohearts.hk