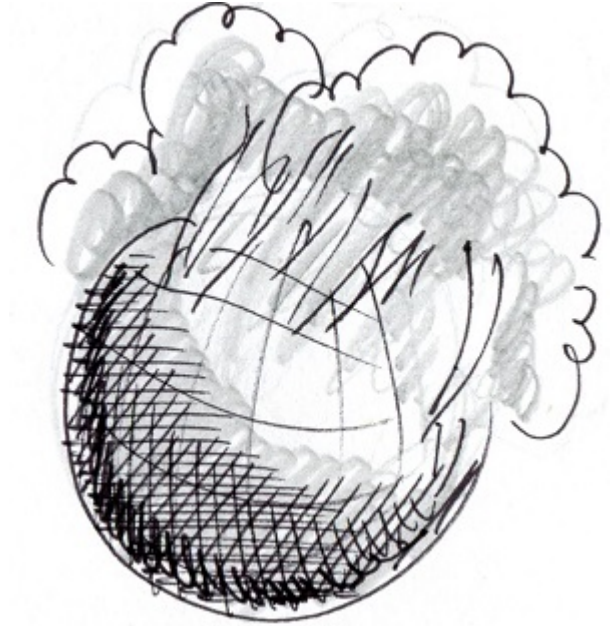


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by Pat Marrin

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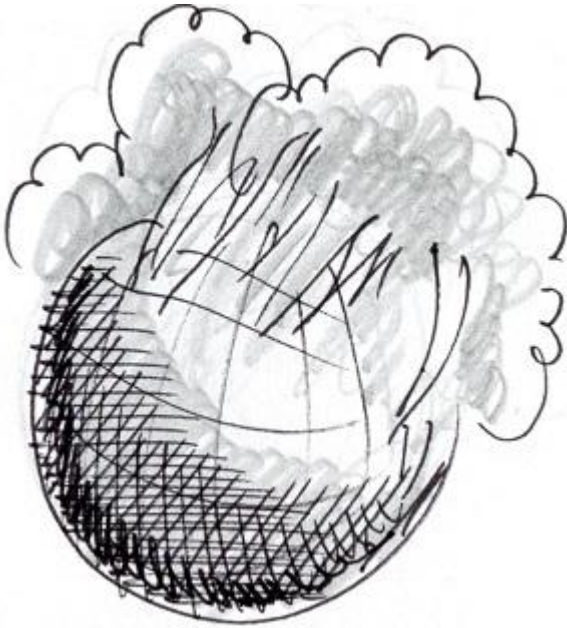
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"God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control" (2 Timothy 1:6)

2 Tim 1:1-3, 6-12; Mark 12:18-27

The readings now relate to the post-Pentecost growth of the church, moving again through the Apostolic Letters and Gospels to highlight the impact of the faith. The saint's days remind us that the death and resurrection of Jesus continue to inspire lives down through history. The age of martyrs has never ended.

Today's commemoration of Charles Lwanga and the martyrs of Uganda offers a timely example. Lwanga and his companions were burned to death in 1886 for being Christians and also because they protested against a despotic ruler who "did not want to appear weak" (see Wikipedia article). Pope Francis intentionally chose central Africa, the site of politically incited ethnic violence, to open the first doors of the Year of Mercy.

In Today's Gospel, the Sadducees confront Jesus about resurrection. They were a wealthy, aristocratic sect within the temple establishment that held only teachings contained in the Torah, which does not include resurrection. To challenge Jesus, they concocted an argument about a woman married to seven brothers hoping for progeny. The Sadducees asked Jesus whose wife she would be in the resurrection after her exhausting role as a serial bride. Their effort to trap Jesus with this absurd question fails when he tells them they understand neither the Scriptures nor God, who is the God of the living, not of the dead. If Torah rests on Moses and the

patriarchs, God affirms that they are alive when He tells Moses from the burning bush, "I AM the God of Abraham, Isaac and Jacob."

Resurrection- the promise of continued life in God --is evident in the courage of martyrs, willing to lay down their lives for purposes larger than themselves because they trust God. When Paul tells his young protege Timothy to keep the faith, he reminds him of the faith inspired in him by his grandmother, Lois, and mother, Eunice.

As I have watched the protests unfold across the country over the death of George Floyd, I have tried to read the many signs being carried and expressions of grief and anger coming from the many young people demanding justice and change. It struck me that Paul's message to Timothy captures the best impulses of a whole generation of young seekers and affirms the presence of the Holy Spirit in this complex and chaotic moment in our nation's history: "Stir into flame the gift that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control."

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