

JANUARY 21, 2022  
Memorial of St. Agnes, Virgin & Martyr  
Mark 3: 13-19

“WITNESSES FOR GOD’S KINGDOM.”

One of the great acts of Jesus was to pray to God the Father. This was His habitual attitude especially decisions essential to His mission. Mountains were His place of communion with the Father, a holy place associated with the presence and existence of God. They were solemn moments in Jesus’ life that He went up the mountains, that is, during the Sermon on the Mount, at the Transfiguration, and after feeding the five thousand people.

Jesus in our gospel again went up the mountain to pray because He will decide who will be His apostles. “They are called ‘apostles.’ A word to be clearly distinguished from ‘disciples.’ The ‘disciple’, which comes from a Latin word meaning ‘to learn’, is essentially a follower who imbibes the teaching of the teacher and tries to make it part of his life. The ‘apostle’, however, from a Greek word meaning ‘to go out on a mission’ (like an ambassador), is essentially one who has a mandate from the teacher to pass on to others. In the Pauline letters, where the term appears most often in the Christian Testament, it means primarily one who has been a witness of the Risen Lord and has been commissioned to proclaim the resurrection. Paul himself, because of his experience at Damascus, is regarded as an Apostle. Jesus summons those He wants to work with Him. The Twelve, reminding us of the twelve tribes of Israel, were to be the leaders, His intimate companions, and they were to be the foundations, the pillars of His Church, except for Judas, the traitor.”<sup>1</sup> They were named the Twelve and commissioned to do the works of Jesus, to continue His mission. They were called to preach, live, and even die to the mission entrusted to them by the Lord.

---

<sup>1</sup> [livingspace.sacredspace.ie](http://livingspace.sacredspace.ie)

Likewise, my dear sisters and brothers, we are called to be witnesses of Christ to the world. We are called by our baptism and confirmation to do and be part of Jesus' mission here on earth. Like the Apostles, we must preach, live, and die for Christ as His followers. Are we ready to do that? Are we willing to live and die for Christ? Jesus summons each one of us to do to build up the Church and be living witnesses in the world. St. Agnes was a living witness of that faith. "In the ancient Roman calendar of the feasts of the martyrs (Depositio Martyrum), her feast is listed on January 21. This record also mentions the name of the road (via Nomentana) near which her grave was said to be located. Today, in the Latin Church, the same date is still observed for her feast. Although few reliable details of how she met her death are recorded in writing, Church writers and poets praised her virginity and heroism under torture. On only one point does there seem to be agreement: she was very young when she gave her life to preserve her integrity. St. Ambrose says she was just 12; St. Augustine says she was 13. Damasus even describes her as going to her martyrdom from the lap of her mother or nurse. She is among the women saints commemorated in the Roman Canon. The name 'Agnes' comes from the Latin word for 'lamb', so traditionally on this feast, the wool from two lambs is presented annually as a tax by the Lateran Canons Regular in Rome to the Chapter of St. John. They are solemnly blessed on the high altar of the church after a pontifical Mass and then offered to the Pope. This wool goes into the making of the pallium, which only the pope and archbishops are entitled to wear over their liturgical vestments."<sup>2</sup>

So, let us ask the intercession of St. Agnes who gave her life to follow Jesus, her bridegroom. She gave her beauty and virginity as a testimony of her faithfulness to Christ. May we also do the same; be faithful witnesses of Christ even giving up ourselves for the sake of the kingdom. St. Agnes, pray for us.

---

<sup>2</sup> ibid