

1. Today I want to talk to you about St. Teresa.
 - a. No not our St. Teresa.
 - b. Rather a Teresa who killed by the Nazis.
2. This Teresa was not killed because of what she said,
 - a. For she taught philosophy in a German university
3. Nor because of what she did.
 - a. For her most revolutionary act was her conversion to Catholicism
 - i. and her consecration as a Carmelite nun.
4. Rather, this Teresa was killed by the Nazis
 - a. because her original name was Edith Stein, and she was Jew.
 - i. Thus she was killed simply for being who she was.
5. The stories we hear about the extermination of the Jews during World War II have been told so often,
 - a. that they have become legendary.
 - b. And that is a shame; for legends lose their ability to shock.
6. No, to understand the horror
 - a. of what happened to Edith and still happens so many others
 - b. we have to ask ourselves, when the last time was, that someone hated US
 - i. Not for something we did or said,
 - ii. but rather simply because we are American, or Asian or Hispanic, a woman or gay, rich and white or poor and black.
 - c. Because we cannot change who we are.
 - i. Oh we can try.
 1. We can spend our money on flashy cars and jewelry to give the appearance of being rich
 2. We can change our hair and our clothes to “fit in” to the group.
 3. We can climb into the political closet, the cultural closet, any kind of closet precisely because closets are places to hide.
 4. But they are also places of fear;
 5. because we can hide many things, friends;
 - a. but we cannot hide who we are.
7. The prophet Jeremiah knew this. And that is why he had a problem.
 - a. Because as a prophet he had to tell the king that the Babylonian army was coming to destroy Jerusalem;
 - b. And **God's** message to the king
 - i. was that they had to surrender or be destroyed.
8. Jeremiah wanted to keep silent;
 - a. People who had been his friends were set to denounce him
 - i. if he spoke against the court prophets
 - ii. who were telling the king what he **wanted** to hear,
 - iii. rather than what he **needed** to hear.
9. And yet he could not keep silent;
 - a. not only because he was a prophet,
 - b. but because God had created him to be a prophet.

- i. And he knew that he knew that no matter what,
 - ii. He could not NOT be The person God created him to be.
- 10. Jesus knew that too, of course.
 - a. (gesturing to the crucifix) if there was ever anyone who had a reason be afraid of being who he was it was him.
 - b. But he was not. From the various stories of the Crucifixion we know that
 - i. even when the chief priests accused him he stood his ground,
 - ii. even when the people taunted him, he prayed for their forgiveness;
 - iii. and even at the moment of his death,
 - 1. when he could no longer speak,
 - a. Roman soldiers acknowledged
 - b. what others were afraid to say
 - c. But what Jesus' whole life proclaimed
 - i. "Truly this man was the Son of God".
- 11. But Jesus knew that even though he was not afraid, his followers would be.
 - a. Because they knew that their baptisms would make them part of a new community
 - i. that followed Jesus' understanding of God's law,
 - 1. a community which in flagrant violation
 - a. of family relationships and community boundaries,
 - b. tribal prejudices and religious commandments
 - i. invited everyone to be equal members.
 - b. And that would make everyone, especially *their* families and friends, their rulers and their religious leaders VERY angry.
- 12. And thus they would be tempted as Jeremiah was to keep silent.
 - a. Because they would be afraid
 - i. of speaking about their faith
 - ii. Of sharing it with others
 - iii. And living it in the world.
- 13. However, according to Jesus there was no reason for fear.
 - a. Because he knew that we, his followers, are who we are
 - i. For the same reason that Jeremiah was who he was .
 - b. God calls us, creates us and in baptism recreates us to be God's new people.
 - c. A family with God as Father and all as brothers and sisters.
- 14. If God knows even the number of hairs on our heads,
 - a. And cares even when a single sparrow dies,
 - i. How could God forget or abandon us
 - 1. For being who God created us to be?
- 15. We could abandon God, Jesus says, at the risk of our souls;
 - a. but the only way we can really do that
 - i. is by NOT being who God created us to be.
 - b. For to do that, is to reject the one who made us that way.
- 16. On August 2, 1942 the Nazis came to the convent in Echt in Holland and arrested both Edith Stein, and another Carmelite nun; her sister Rosa, who had also become a Christian.
 - a. Edith had recently finished her last book; the *Science of the Cross*.

- i. In which she said that all of us who sought to be the people God made us to be would experience the cross in our lives.
- 17. The last thing we know about her were the words she spoke to her sister as they were being taken away;
 - a. “Come, we go with our people.”
- 18. Edith, had found her cross
 - a. And she knew that only by carrying it with them
 - b. Could Edith: Catholic, nun, philosopher and Jew proclaim to all that even in death God will not abandon us when arefaithful to who we truly are.
- 19. We don’t think much about who we are as Catholics. For most of us catholic is a label; like the ones on the clothes we wear or the food we eat.
- 20. In fact many of us would not have a clue as to what makes being a Catholic Christian different from anyone else.
 - a. And that is because the great danger of our age
 - i. is to allow ourselves to think that to be a good Christian is
 - b. EITHER to share the values, the beliefs and the prejudices of the culture around us,
 - i. which many claim is “Christian” but which in fact is not,
 - 1. and never really has been.
 - c. OR to think that being a Christian means to insist on the law, and to impose it upon others,
 - i. forcing them to be something they cannot be;
 - 1. even though we think theyare.
- 21. Though both responses are different, they grow from the same Fear;
 - a. either fear of being different from others,
 - b. or fear of others’ differences from us.
- 22. Maybe that is why Jesus says to us today what he said to his disciples back then: FEAR NO ONE and become who you truly are:
 - a. God’s beloved child.
- 23. Allow no one to drive you into a closet of fear,
 - a. and see to it that you never lock anyone else there.
- 24. Instead, be who you were baptized to be!
 - a. A part of a community which challenges rules and boundaries and traditions and prejudices to welcome all people into a closer communion with God; Just like Jesus did and does for you.
 - b. Such a life isn’t safe; oh no, far from it; it will continue to make many people angry;
 - c. But even in that, when we experience the Cross of anger and prejudice for welcoming, loving and affirming those who this world would reject hate or ignore,
 - 1. God will not abandon us for precisely at those moments we are being who God created us to be.