

Today, on this St. George's Day, we gather to reflect on the words of our Lord and Saviour, Jesus Christ, from John 15:18-21.

These are powerful and challenging words from our Lord, reminding us that as Christians, we may face persecution and opposition in the world. These are also words of comfort. Jesus himself faced opposition and persecution, and he understands the challenges we face as we seek to follow him.

These are also words that may be difficult for us to hear, but they are important for us to understand. As followers of Christ, we are called to live differently than the world around us. We are called to love our enemies, care for the marginalized, seek justice, and share the good news of the gospel. And yet, these very things may lead to persecution and even hatred from those around us.

Today, as we celebrate the feast of St. George, we remember the story of a man who faced persecution for his faith. St. George was a soldier in the Roman army, but he refused to renounce his faith in Christ. For this, he was tortured and ultimately martyred. His story reminds us of the cost of discipleship and the courage and faithfulness that are sometimes required of us as Christians.

As Christians, we also recognize that there are many ways in which our faith can be challenged and opposed. It is not always physical

persecution that we face, but sometimes more subtle forms of discrimination or marginalization.

And yet, we are called to follow Christ in all things, even when it is difficult or unpopular to do so. These are not easy tasks, but they are essential if we are to be faithful to the call of Christ.

But we must remember that we are not alone in this struggle. Jesus himself faced persecution and rejection, and he understands our pain and our struggles. He reminds us that we are not greater than our master and that we should not be surprised when we face the same challenges he did.

As followers of Christ, we reject the idea that our faith requires us to hate or exclude those who are different from us. We recognize that God's love is inclusive and unconditional and that all people are valued and beloved in God's sight. We seek to build bridges rather than walls, to listen and learn from those with whom we disagree, and to work for the common good of all people.

But living out our faith in this way can be challenging. It can require us to speak out against injustice, confront our own biases and prejudices, and stand up for what we believe in even when it is unpopular or difficult to do so. It can require us to risk rejection or persecution, just as St. George did so many years ago.

So today, when we honour the memory of St. George by renewing our commitment to follow Christ, even in the face of opposition and persecution. We are called to resist the temptation to hate or exclude those who oppose us. Let us remember that we are called to be light in the darkness, to love our enemies, and to work for justice and inclusion for all people. It requires courage, conviction, and a willingness to stand up for what we believe in, even when it is unpopular or goes against the prevailing culture, and let us trust that no matter what may come, we are never alone, for Christ is always with us. This is not always an easy task, but it is essential if we are to be faithful to the call of Christ.

Jesus wants a world in which love, friendship, and inclusion prevail. But we find ourselves in a world of domination, corruption, revenge, and exclusion. To have the courage to make the right choices we must be firmly grounded in the friendship and support of Jesus.

As we reflect on Jesus' words from John 15, we are reminded that even in Jesus' time, the religious and political authorities were threatened by his message of love, mercy, and inclusion. They felt that their power and authority were being challenged, and they sought to silence Jesus and his followers by any means necessary.

These tasks can be daunting, and we may feel overwhelmed at times by the magnitude of the challenges we face. But we can take comfort in the fact that we are not alone. Christ walks with us on this journey, and he

offers us the strength and courage we need to face whatever challenges may come our way.

So today, let us renew our commitment to follow Christ, even in the face of opposition and persecution. Let us be inspired by the example of St. George, who stood firm in his faith even when it cost him his life. And let us trust in the promise of Christ, that he will be with us always, even to the end of the age.