

13TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME “A” 2020

Even though I really like reading history, I never took much time in my life to read about World War II. So, during the lockdown, I started watching some You Tube videos about World War II.

One evening, I came across a video recounting the stories of women spies during World War II. I confess I had never read or heard about any of these women and how important they were to the war efforts—women such as Helene & Jacki Deschamps, Violette Bushell Szabo, Noor Inayat Khan, Yvonne Cormeau, Vera Atkins, Barbara Laura Padowski, Krystyna Skarbek, Claire Phillips, Betty McIntosh, Nancy Wake, and Virginia Hall, just to name a few. They were extraordinarily courageous women who did unbelievable things. They played pivotal roles in helping win the war.

One of those women spies, Helene Deschamps, in a post-war interview, said: *“When you became a secret agent for the underground, you had to give up everything. You couldn’t keep friends. You had to forget your family. You had to forget normal life. You had no life at all except the cause you were fighting for.”* Helene knew this personally in her life. Her sister Jacki was killed during one of their secret missions.

I thought of those brave women, and especially Helene Deschamps’ words when I read what Jesus said in today’s Gospel: *“Whoever loves father or mother more than me is not worthy of me, and whoever loves son or daughter more than me is not worthy of me; and whoever does not take up his cross and*

follow after me is not worthy of me. Whoever finds his life will lose it, and whoever loses his life for my sake will find it.”

If we want to be part of the army of the Lord to fight the forces of evil that are destroying so much of our nation and our world, we have to be totally committed to Jesus’ cause. We can’t be half-hearted fence sitters.

When I was little, my Uncle Jim used to call a bird sitting on a fence or a

telephone wire a *mugwamp*. For quite a while, I thought that *mugwamp* was the actual name of the bird. It was only later that my uncle said that he called the bird a *mugwamp* because it had its *mug* on one side of the fence and its *wamp* on the other side.

When it comes to Jesus’ cause, we can’t be *mugwamps*. We have to be all in if we want to be effective in our Lord’s resistance movement and if, one day, we want to share in Jesus’ ultimate victory. Half-hearted admirers will not do.

There is a true story about 2 African-American brothers who lived in the South during the 50’s and 60’s. One brother, Robert, became a noted lawyer and politician. The other brother, Clarence, got involved in the civil rights movement—not exactly a popular occupation in those days. If you remember, tensions between blacks and whites were very high. People

were staging sit-ins and marched down city streets. Police used dogs and fire hoses to disperse the protesters.

Eventually Clarence's work got him into trouble with the law, and he turned to his brother Robert for legal help. But Robert wouldn't help him. What shocked Clarence most of all was that both of them had committed their lives to Christ together as young men.

After confronting Robert about why he wouldn't help him, Robert defended himself saying, "*Clarence, I do follow Jesus, but only up to a point. I follow him up to the cross, but not on the cross. I'm not getting myself crucified.*"

Clarence looked at his brother and said, "*Robert, you're not a follower of Jesus. You're only an admirer, a fan of His.*" Brothers and sisters, half-hearted admirers and fans of Jesus won't do.

Our church, our nation and our world are such messes right now because there is a cataclysmic culture war going on that is attacking and trying to destroy our most sacred beliefs and institutions and beliefs. And this war is just as brutal as World War II.

The only solution comes from God's saving grace. To receive that grace, first we need to get down on our knees and repent of our sins, especially in the Sacrament of Confession. And then we need to re-consecrate our entire lives to Christ. Finally, we need to stand up and take the proper actions, inspired by the Holy Spirit and guided by the Gospel of Jesus Christ. If we do this with the single-minded dedication of those women spies during World War II, then we will prevail in this battle.

The former Archbishop of Boston, Cardinal Richard Cushing, expressed it this way.

If all the sleeping folks will wake up, and
all the lukewarm folks will fire up, and
all the disgruntled folks will sweeten up, and
all the discouraged folks will cheer up, and
all the depressed folks will look up, and
all the estranged folks will make up, and
all the gossiping folks will shut up, and
all the dry bones will shake up, and
all the true soldiers will stand up, and
all the church members will pray up, and
if the Savior of all will be lifted up . . .
then we can have the greatest renewal
this world has ever known. Amen.