

GOSPEL PEARLS

Sheep among wolves

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Jesus said to his disciples: "Beware of them, because they will hand you over to local courts and flog you in their synagogues. You will even be brought before governors and kings because of me, to bear witness to them and to the Gentiles. But when they hand you over, don't worry about how or what you are to speak. For you will be given what to say at that hour, because it isn't you speaking, but the Spirit of your Father is speaking through you. Brother will betray brother to death, and a father his child. Children will rise up against parents and have them put to death. You will be hated by everyone because of my name. But

the one who endures to the end will be saved." (Matthew 10: 17-22)

The enthusiasm of new converts, like all of Jesus's first disciples, must always bear in mind that the Lord sends them into the world as sheep among wolves. The world needs to see in Christians authoritative persons who bear witness to the word of God and with integrity, with faith lived out in their own lives. Death is also part of life, and with it, Christians are sometimes called to bear witness to the truth of God's Word. This is exactly what St. Stephen, the first martyr, and many others who came after him, did. For example, St. Joan of Arc, before being burnt alive and in response to a trick question corrupt judges had asked her, said "If I am not in God's Grace, may God put me there; and if I am, may God so keep me there."