

**Fourth Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year c. April 21, 2013**

THEME: Snatched

This week has been as explosive as any we have known in quite some time, hasn't it?

First the Boston marathon bombings then the horrendous fire and explosion in the small Texan town of West.

On top of that, the cowardice of the United States Senate to do anything to stem the slaughter of Americans by gun violence.

Hardly in the news at all, an earthquake in China killed more than a hundred; Syria again bombed unsuspecting civilian villages.

And finally on Friday the massive, televised manhunt for the fleeing Boston bombers.

What a week. What a week for television news.

Reflecting on these events in light of the Gospel text, a striking parallel emerges.

So many people were this week, in an instant, without warning, snatched away.

They were taken away in death from family and loved ones like sheep snatched away from a dazing shepherd in the middle of the night.

Little Martin Richard waiting for his mom to cross the marathon finish line: snatch away.

Krystle Campbell enjoying the excitement of the marathon festivities as she did every year and a Chinese grad student savoring a "Patriot's Pay" in America: both snatched away.

None expected their lives to be ended on Monday.

Similarly the volunteer firefighters called out for a fire at the local fertilizer plant.

Nor the folks of that sleepy little Texas town of West just sitting down to dinner or the evening news or Jeopardy.

Then kaboom, and they were gone.

And even though, according to the Brady campaign against Gun violence, 33 people are snatched away and murdered with guns (8 of them children or teens) on an average day in America, still our Senate could not bring itself to pass even moderately protective gun laws.

A 26 year old campus security guard snatched away by a bullet from desperate, fleeing bombers.

An earthquake, gone.

A bomb from a jet, gone.

While we may not often think about it, or like to think about it, we know that our lives can be snatched away from us without notice:

In dramatic fashion like this week's news or in an accident or sudden heart attack.

The Gospel words of Jesus then have particular poignancy:

"I give my sheep eternal life and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand."

For those who hear the voice of Jesus and follow him there is the promise of eternal life and the assurance they will never perish.

Then he added: **"No one can take them out of my hand No one can snatch them from me."**

And if this we not assurance enough: **"No one take them from (can snatch them from) the Father's hand. The Father and I are one."**

The Father and I are of one mind on this.

Sisters and brothers, there is extremely good news here.

Though we face the prospect of being snatched away from this human material existence, Christ assures us that as his disciples, as those who hear his voice and follow him we are destined for a life that cannot be snatched away.

We are in his protective hand, and that of his father forever.

Terrible events like those of this past explosive week may trouble our hearts and mind now.

But, as John the visionary of the Book of Revelation saw, we are part of that great multitude from every nation, race, people and tongue who will stand safe and secure before the throne of God and the Lamb.

The one who sits on the throne will shelter us.

The lamb will shepherd us.

He will lead us to life giving water.

We will not hunger or thirst again.

Our God will wipe every tear from our eyes.

And, finally there will be, as 8 year old Martin Richard wrote on own his poster before being snatched away from us: **"no more hurting people. Peace."**