

Meditation - Conversion

Acts 22:3-16

Paul addressed the people in these words: “I am a Jew, born in Tarsus in Cilicia, but brought up in this city. At the feet of Gamaliel, I was educated strictly in our ancestral law and was zealous for God, just as all of you are today. I persecuted this Way to death, binding both men and women and delivering them to prison. Even the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify on my behalf. For from them I even received letters to the brothers and set out for Damascus to bring back to Jerusalem in chains for punishment those there as well.

“On that journey as I drew near to Damascus, about noon a great light from the sky suddenly shone around me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’ I replied, ‘Who are you, sir?’

And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazorean whom you are persecuting.’

My companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me.

I asked, ‘What shall I do, sir?’ The Lord answered me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus, and there you will be told about everything appointed for you to do.’

Since I could see nothing because of the brightness of that light, I was led by hand by my companions and entered Damascus.

“A certain Ananias, a devout observer of the law, and highly spoken of by all the Jews who lived there, came to me and stood there and said, ‘Saul, my brother, regain your sight.’ And at that very moment I regained my sight and saw him.

Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors designated you to know his will, to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his voice; for you will be his witness before all to what you have seen and heard. Now, why delay? Get up and have yourself baptized and your sins washed away, calling upon his name.’

Point I:

This crucial moment was pivotal to Paul's immortal life. It is certain that he reached a turning point there, a reversal of his life's outlook.

Can you imagine the fear and urgency Saul feels? He must be totally perplexed. The event is so spontaneous and unexpected that it seems to provoke from him a response, despite his fear...and Saul asks, "What shall I do sir."

In this vivid encounter with Christ, Saul is open to a correct response, and wouldn't we do the same? Conversion helps us to ask the question, "What, Lord, do you want me to do in this time, this moment of my life?"

Notes

Point II:

It is the dazzling radiance of the Risen Christ that blinds him and transforms his thinking and life. He will never be the same again. He will never be Saul again. But this is only the first part of the process.

Notice his friends, not fully involved in the encounter with the Risen Christ like Saul, but nonetheless affected since they had seen the light, help Saul. Whereas before they were assisting him in the capture and persecution of Christians, now they are helping their friend Saul, reminiscent of how the paralytic was brought before Jesus by his friends. Only now Saul's friends do not realize the importance of their aid.

They are being guided by God through Saul as Saul's transformation unfolds. Might they be transformed, too, as a witness to the consequences as Saul's conversion develops?

Through another person, that is, Ananias, a person of God who understands how God directs people, Saul is able to know and be presented with a remedy to his blindness and uncertainty.

What happened? Saul's interior life is exposed in his encounter with Christ. What was his inner reality that became outwardly apparent? All these years of effort, all his initiative, his energy, his thinking, his satisfaction, and esteem was based on a lie. Saul was blind to the truth. His blindness from the light which enveloped him was a reflection of his interior life. He was blind to the truth. He was blind to the light that is Christ.

His response of "What shall I do?" showed docility to being led by God.

With regard to ourselves, where is God hoping to encounter us in the truth about our lives? Where is that He is calling us to renewal? Where is God leading me? The answer is always to a greater intimacy with Him. What obstacle might be preventing us from a greater conversion that brings us a blessing far more than we imagine?

Notes

Point III:

There is a purpose beyond the personal transformation of Paul. Paul received a mission. Jesus gave Paul a task. His task was to be sent to bring people to Christ.

Why does St. Paul not refer to the most important moment of his life as a conversion? And what is the Church wanting us to know calling this Feast Day the Conversion of St. Paul that can help us?

This event alone, this powerful encounter with Christ, is the key to understanding what had happened to St. Paul. He experienced death and resurrection, renewal on the part of Christ who had shown Himself and had spoken to St. Paul. It is in this deeper sense we can speak of conversion.

This is what the Church wants us to know. Conversion is about a personal encounter with Christ for the sake of a real renewal that allows us to change more toward that person God created us to be in intimate relationship with Him.

Let us pray to the Lord to illumine us, to grant us an encounter with His presence in our own personal worlds, and grant us a lively faith, and an open heart and great love for all, which is capable of renewing the world.

Notes
