

Sat: 23<sup>rd</sup> Jan

Mk 3, 20-21

**Jesus went home, and such a crowd collected that they could not even have a meal. When his relatives heard of this, they set out to take charge of him, convinced that he was out of his mind.**

Was Jesus out of his mind?

Yes! He was mad with love for God and for his people. He was so mad that he dedicated his whole waking moments giving himself for the mission.

Jesus was out of his mind, not in the sense of being mentally unsound, but he was passionate for God, for people. His heart was one with God...his heart was totally loving the people, that even his closet family could not understand him. What is our passion? What is THE THING that takes away our mind, our time, our creativity? Is it Korean drama series? Is it computer games? Is it Happy Hour with jugs of beer? What is our passion? Is it God? Is it giving ourselves to bring people close to God?

We are called to be Fools for Christ- Fools whose lives are totally with Christ, for Christ, in Christ.

The world needs Fools for Christ... in order to make sense to this world of hatred, revenge, injustice, oppression, greed. People need us to show them that God still exists and that he has not abandoned them to the chaotic mess.

Let us look at Jesus... and ask him to reveal his heart to us so that we can see what it is beating for. Let us imitate his heart so that we may also be mad for God, and passion in bringing his love to those around us.

*Jesus, let me understand your heart. I want to be a Fool for you in this world so that I can truly be your Friend who shines your message of Love in this world.*

Sun: 24th Jan

Lk 1,1-4; 4,14-21

... Jesus, with the power of the Holy Spirit in him, returned to Galilee and his reputation spread throughout the countryside. He taught in their synagogues and everyone praised him. He came to Nazara, where he had been brought up, and went into the synagogue on the Sabbath day as he usually did. He stood up to read, and they handed him the scroll of the prophet Isaiah. Unrolling the scroll he found the place where it is written: The spirit of the Lord has been given to me, for he has anointed me. He has sent me to bring the good news to the poor, to proclaim liberty to captives and to the blind new sight, to set the downtrodden free, to proclaim the Lord's year of favour. He then unrolled the scroll, gave it back to the assistant and sat down. And all eyes in the synagogues were fixed on him. Then he began to speak to them, 'The text is being fulfilled today even as you listen.'

Jesus read the words of Isaiah 61 with authority and conviction. The people who listened to him sensed that he was someone different from their rabbis and teachers of the Law. They looked at Jesus with wonder...with hope. Could this simple man...the son of a carpenter... be the long-awaited Messiah?

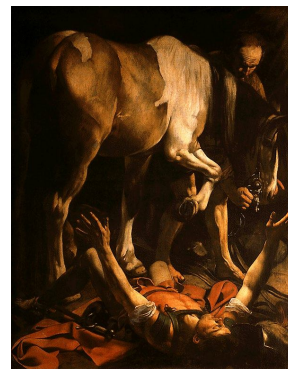
Do we fix our eyes on Jesus and look at him with wonder and hope? Jesus is the Messiah. Jesus is the Christ who has come to bring Good News to our lives. In fact, he is our Good News. He comes to set us free from all that prevent us to live in freedom and peace. He gives us sight to look at each other with dignity and respect. Jesus is the fulfilment of the prophecy of Isaiah, He comes to offer us salvation. Is Jesus our Good News? Do we then live in joy and freedom? *Thank you for coming into my life to set me free. I ask you, Jesus, to give me the faith to see you again in this time of prayer... and to fix my eyes on you throughout the day.*

### The Conversion of St Paul, Apostle

Mon: 25th Jan

Acts 22, 3-16

**Paul said to the people, 'I am a Jew and was born at Tarsus in Cilicia. I was brought up here in this city. I studied under Gamaliel and was taught the exact observance of the Law of our ancestors. In fact, I was full of duty towards God as you are today. I even persecuted this Way to the death, and sent women as well as men to prison in chains as the high priest and the whole council of elders can testify, since they even sent me with letters to their brothers in Damascus. When I set off it was with the intention of bringing prisoners back from there to Jerusalem for punishment.**



I was on that journey and nearly at Damascus when about midday a bright light from heaven suddenly shone round me. I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying, "Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?" I answered, "Who are you, Lord?" and he said to me, "I am Jesus the Nazarene, and you are persecuting me."...The light had been so dazzling that I was blind and my companions had to take me by the hand; and so I came to Damascus. Someone called Ananias, a devote follower of the Law and highly thought by all the Jews living there, came to see me; he stood beside me and said, "Brother Saul, receive your sight." Instantly, my sight came back and I was able to see him. Then he said, "The God of our ancestors has

**chosen you to know his will, to see the Just One and hear his own voice speaking, because you are to be his witness before all mankind, testifying to what you have seen and heard. And now why delay? It is time you were baptised, and had your sins washed away while invoking his name."**

The conversion of Saul, or later known as Paul, left a deep mark on his life. Initially, his misguided passion was aimed at persecuting the Early Church. Later, however, when he heard the voice of Jesus and saw the bright light shining around him, he knew that his way was not to persecute the Early Church but to build it.

"Who are you, Lord?" This was the question that Paul asked at the start of his conversion and one that surely he kept on asking throughout his mission. Little by little, he discovered and marvelled at who he was for God... In his writings, Paul kept his identity firmly in his heart- He was an apostle, servant, called and sent by God.

Who am I? – Perhaps this is a question that we need to ask and rediscover as we journey closer to Jesus. In discovering who we are for Jesus, we will ultimately discover who he is for us. We will also realise that we too are called and sent to the same mission as Paul. Jesus has chosen us to know his will, to see and hear him in people, in situations, in the silence of prayer. Each of us is his witnesses before humanity of today. Why delay?

*Jesus, help me to be like St Paul, this great apostle. Let me deepen who am I for you and who you are for me, O Lord. Help me see with eyes of faith your will for me today and everyday of my life. Give me courage never to stop being your apostle.*

### St Timothy and Titus

Tue: 26th Jan

1 Timothy 1, 1-8

From Paul, appointed by God to be an apostle of Christ Jesus in his design to promise life in Christ Jesus; to Timothy, my dear child of mine, wishing you grace, mercy and peace from God the Father and from Christ Jesus our Lord. Night and day I thank God, keeping my conscience clear and remembering my duty to him as my ancestors did, and always I remember you in my prayers; I remember your tears and long to see you again to complete my happiness. Then I am reminded of the sincere faith which you have; it came first to live in your grandmother Lois, and you mother Eunice, and I have no doubt that it is the same faith in you as well. That is why I am reminding you now to fan into flame the gift that God gave you when I laid hands on you. God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but a Spirit of power, and love, and self-control. So you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to the Lord, or ashamed of me

**for being his prisoner; but with me, bear the hardships for the sake of the Good News, relying on the power of God who has saved us and called us to be holy.**

St Paul wrote this letter in his old aged and while he was kept in prison. Yet, St Paul did not lose his love for Christ and his zeal to be a witness to Jesus. He was always willing to bear hardships for the One who called and sent him. In St Paul, we could see that he did possess the Spirit of power, love and self-control. The Spirit of power that drove him to speak boldly and live authentically. The Spirit of love that helped him love the people he ministered to. The Spirit of self-control that kept him focussed on things in heaven and not here on earth. St. Paul desired that Timothy and Titus too allowed the same Spirit to guide them in their mission.

Do we allow the Spirit of power, love and self-control to guide us in our lives? What prevent/s us from being an apostle, like St Paul, St Timothy and St Titus? Are we ashamed of witnessing to Jesus?

*Lord, help me never to be ashamed of you...of my faith!  
Send your Spirit of love to guide me and empower me!*

**Wed: 27<sup>th</sup> Jan**

**Mk 4, 1-20**

**... He said to them, 'Do you not understand this parable? Then how will you understand any parables? What the sower is sowing is the Word. Those on the edge of the path where the word is sown are people who have no sooner heard it than Satan comes and carries away the word that was sown in them. Similarly, those who receive the seed on patches of rock are people, who, when first they hear the word, welcome it at once with joy. But they have no root in them, they do not last; should some trail come, or some persecution on account of the word, they fall away at once. Then there are others who receive the seed in thorns. These have heard the word, but the worries of this world, the lure of riches and all the other passions come in and choke the word, and so it produces nothing. And there are those who have received the seed in rich soil: they hear the word and accept it and yield a harvest, thirty and sixty and a hundredfold.'**

God generously sows his Word everyday in our hearts. It is up to us on our attitude on how we welcome, keep and allow the Word to grow in our lives.

This parable speaks of freedom that God gives to us. He sows...he gives us the freedom on what kind of soil we want to be- the edge of the path, the rocky ground, the thorns or the rich soil. Jesus said in the Gospel of Matthew 11,6:



'Happy the person who does not lose faith in me.' In choosing to become like the good soil, we are working to keep our faith In Jesus and allowing his Word to grow and take root in our lives.

Today, Jesus asks us the same question he posed to his disciples, 'Do you not understand this parable?' Parables are stories that will not make us to remain indifferent but to choose for Jesus or against Him. What is the choice that we make today?

**Thu: 28<sup>th</sup> Jan**

**Mk 4, 21-25**

**Jesus said to the crowd: 'Would you bring in a lamp to put it under a tub or under the bed? Surely you will put it on the lamb-stand? For there is nothing hidden but it must be disclosed, nothing kept secret except to be brought to light. If anyone has ears to hear, let him listen to this.' He also said to them, 'Take notice of what you are hearing. The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given- and more besides; for the man who has will be given more; from the man who has not, even what he has will be taken away.'**

A Christian is a person who is generous. Yet, there are many who fail to listen to the call of Jesus to take notice of what he is saying, 'The amount you measure out is the amount you will be given.' Do we model our hearts after the Heart of our God who gives himself to the end, unconditionally and without any expectations for rewards?

To be generous is not just about giving out money to the poor. Rather, it is to give our time to our family members- to give words of life and love to our friends- to share our faith to those who yet to know Christ. There are so many ways that we can be generous.

Someone once said, 'You do not need to be rich to be generous. If he/she has the spirit of true generosity, a pauper can give like a prince.' Do we have the spirit of true generosity?

Today, let us give like a prince/princess, not because we are rich and have tons of money to give away. Rather, let us be give away our love, smiles, words of kindness, time, patience, forgiveness... so that we can become a true Christian, a real friend of Jesus, an authentic witness to God.

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**Prayer for Living**

**Fri: 22<sup>nd</sup> Jan**

**Mk 3, 13-19**

**Jesus went up into the hills and summoned those he wanted. So they came to him and he appointed twelve; they were to be his companions and to be sent out to preach, with power to cast out devils. And so he appointed the Twelve: Simon to whom he gave the name Peter, James the son of Zebedee and John the brother of James, to whom he gave the name Boanerges or 'Sons of Thunder'; then Andrew, Philip, Bartholomew, Matthew, Thomas, James the son of Alphaeus, Thaddaeus, Simon the Zealot and Judas Iscariot, the man who was to betray him.**

Jesus regards each of us as his companions- friends who possess his same heart. Looking at the Gospel, the heart of Jesus is a heart that loves right to the end even right up to the cross. Are we his companions through the way we live, or are we simply 'companions' by name? Are we attracted to Jesus so much so that our whole lives are radically focussed just on imitating just him?

In the Church today, Jesus has many workers but very few friends. There are many workers in the church who do lots of things, busy themselves with activities, but not at all in connection with the heart of Jesus. Jesus reminds us, 'I no longer called you servants, because a servant does not know his master's business. Instead, I have called you friends, because I have made known to you everything that I have heard from my Father.' (Jn 15,15)

This is who we are- Friends, not workers, of Jesus. It is only when we are his companions that mission has a meaning...mission makes sense. It is from the heart of Jesus that we are called to share the Good News of Jesus' love.

As friends of Jesus, we are invited to draw closer to his heart and listen with care all what he has to share with us. When we listen carefully to Jesus, he will draw our attention to a friend whom we have not called for long time, or a neglected family member, or an irritating colleague who need our extra patience, or our family who need us to be there for them...etc. Today, do we dare to look at who Jesus is pointing at? Are we his friends or merely his workers?