

Homily. 2nd Sunday of Ordinary Time. Year.A. 18/19 January 2020.

Neither John the Baptist nor St. Paul were salesmen. They weren't on a marketing gig dressing up a product as something it wasn't, or as we say putting lipstick on a pig. They didn't try to make something bad seem pretty good, nor did they aim to make a good message sound even better than it was. Both of these men told it like it was, and not being in any popularity contest they spoke the truth as they'd come to know it both in and out of season. They were men of conviction and courage with an honest directness inspired by God's Spirit. They said what they meant and meant what they said. For those of us who are on about seeking the truth rather than spinning fantasies, John and Paul are our mentors.

John baptised Jesus, seeing the Spirit of God come down upon Him and hearing the Divine voice proclaim Him as Beloved Son. Without any frills John witnessed to what he'd experienced pointing people to Jesus, the Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world. These same true words are used to this day in every Mass. John gave his witness even though it meant that people would turn away from him, henceforth giving their attention and allegiance to Jesus. John knew that God's call and his own integrity demanded this of him for Jesus, the sacrificial lamb, was given to the world so as to baptise us in the Holy Spirit which sets us free.

Around 35 years after the events narrated in the gospel and a year or two after the Ascension of Jesus Himself Paul enters the story, experiencing his conversion to the Christian way. His passion for capturing, convicting and killing the followers of Christ in order to keep Judaism pure and

undefiled was converted into an equally passionate desire to win people over to the truth of the Good News of Christ, the crucified and risen Lord. This weekend we heard the first three verses introducing his Letter to the Corinthians. Paul dedicated the remaining 30 years of his life to this mission, witnessing the truth that Jesus was the Lord, living and active in those who believed in Him. No hardship, deprivation or suffering ever deviated Paul from this grace and missionary conviction. Like John before him, Paul gave this witness to his dying breath as a martyr.

There are many calls on our time, energy, resources and attention today, but none for us can be greater or more noble than our first Baptismal call to witness to our faith in Jesus Christ. Yes, of course we do this by our words, but it's as clear as day that more often and most powerfully our witness to the truth we have received is offered by our deeds, our actions and our way of living. As the late Pope St. John Paul the 2nd said; We are the only Good News that most people will ever get to hear and see, or as St. Francis of Assisi once said; preach the gospel everywhere, and use words if you must.

John saw in the man from Nazareth the coming of our baptism into God's Spirit, the future for humanity. St. Paul grasped that Jesus had risen and was Lord of all. He knew that we who believe are made into living parts of His body here on earth at this crucial time. Truth, freely and lovingly offered, is what we are on about, our utterly essential witness that from now onwards defines the entire purpose and direction of our lives.