

Homily. 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year.A. 29/30 August 2020.

As St. Luke's Acts of the Apostles and the letters of St. Paul himself attest, he never stopped learning about God's work for us in Christ from the day of his conversion right up to the day of his martyrdom in Rome. First and foremost, Paul always remained a disciple of Christ Jesus. This means that he was ever a man open to learning about his faith, a person wanting to grow in his daily relationship with his Lord. Sometimes his learning was easy and joyful, at others it was difficult and painful. Whatever came to pass, being so caught up in the gift of hope his Christian faith brought to him, Paul remained full of wonder and receptive to the ongoing teaching of his Master in his life.

This weekend Paul shares with us something very important about the Lord and our faith in Him, born from this wonder, rising out of his own discipleship of continuous curiosity and learning. He tells us who are the Lord's disciples today that getting to know Jesus better and walking more closely and faithfully in His way leads us to a revolution in our thinking and behaviour. No longer are the values and practices of this world our model. Instead, the generous, self-giving pattern of Jesus Christ is to set the tone for our relationships, thinking and acting. If we co-operate with this renewal, Paul says that we will come to discover the will of God knowing what is good, what it is that God wants and what is the perfect thing for us to do today. This is the gift of our Christian discipleship, a gift and a revolution from God that we all need so very much at this time of global uncertainty and such great change.

To be honest with you though, many of us aren't like St. Paul, maybe even most of us. Thankfully, we can take heart because we have a model

in St. Peter, a man who struggled with his discipleship from the day he met Jesus until he, too, was martyred in Rome. Peter was often wrong, and when he was right it took him only moments to get things wrong again. Still, he was chosen by Jesus, becoming the leader of the community of disciples in its earliest days. As we discovered last weekend he could be open to inspiration and grace, proclaiming Jesus to be the Christ, the Son of the living God. Yet, seconds later as we've heard here, Peter argued heatedly with Jesus about what this meant.

You see, Peter thought that being Christ, the Son of the living God was all about glory, power and prestige, something which he, as a follower of the Lord, hoped to enjoy. When Jesus taught that His future was one of service, sacrifice, suffering and death, it was too far beyond the pale for Peter liking, hence the disagreement that ensued. Peter was modelling the Lord's future and his own on the values and aspirations of this world, not on the values and will of God. Peter hadn't yet learnt to listen right, prompting Jesus to give him some stern teaching about God's way. Nevertheless, despite this altercation and many other setbacks, denials and mis-steps, Peter eventually did learn giving hope to those of us who, like him, get God and the gospel more often wrong than right.

When it comes to being a Christian, we're always disciples, always learners and followers of our teacher, Jesus Christ. As the Psalm said, our souls are thirsting for God. If this deep thirst of ours is ever going to be quenched then we have to stay open and attentive to what the Lord is saying, seeking to put our own feet in the steps He's already laid down. In our own way, like the very different characters of Sts. Peter and Paul, we go on as life long learners. This time of ours to live when a new era and

age is coming to birth, has much to teach us about God's will and about what is the good and perfect thing for us to do. May God, through Christ our Teacher, help us to discover this good path, nurturing it and keeping it safe all the while stirring within us the desire to serve our neighbours in a way modelled after Jesus the Lord who keeps on generously serving us.