

3rd Friday of Easter “Three Marbles to Consider on the Feast Day of St Joseph the Worker”
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May 1, 2020

We are treated with an iconic passage from the Acts of the Apostles this morning, the conversion of Saul who had been a fierce persecutor of the Early Christians. There are three thoughts that bounce around my head like marbles when I run into this story, particularly as we celebrate the feast day of St. Joseph the Worker and as we enter into the month of May, which is of course Mary’s month.

First, I find it fascinating how many of the Apostle’s conversions happened suddenly and dramatically. It seems to be a matter of public record that all the remaining disciples fled the night Jesus was betrayed. Peter even denied that he knew Jesus three times. And yet, only a few days later they were risking their lives proclaiming the resurrection. Like the other disciples, Saul’s conversion was sudden and resulted in a 180 degree turn in his life. For me, that makes Christianity all the more credible as a moment in history that changed the world forever. And speaking of that 180 degree turn...this leads me to the second marble.

And perhaps this is the most disconcerting marble. You see, it is clear that Saul thought that he was doing God a favor when he persecuted Christians. In fact the story says his purpose for being on the road to Damascus was to find Christians and bring them back in chains. What this means is, instead of being on the road to Damascus he was clearly on the road to hell, and he was completely oblivious to that thinking the opposite, that he was doing God’s will. This is very disconcerting because what this means is, it is very possible to live our lives completely oblivious about which road we are on. This is why our relationship with God, our relationship with Jesus needs to be discerned, nurtured and confirmed with the help of the Lord’s Body, the Church. It is not possible to have an authentic relationship with Jesus by ourselves, we need others to help us with that. Which leads us to the third marble.

Ananias. When the Lord asked Ananias to take in Saul...it was almost like God asking him to welcome a serial killer into his home. Ananias probably even knew a number of people who were dead because of Saul and now God wanted to take him in and call him “brother”. And yet, it is amazing how quickly Ananias was able to do this...welcome a man like Saul. I find it beautiful in that, the normal human response would be to give Saul a taste of his own medicine. But the opposite was the case, Ananias gave Saul hospitality and love. And that moment captures something about Christianity that is quite beautiful, in that from its very inception, Christianity is about love conquering evil. That is what the cross was about. That is what the preaching of the Apostles in the midst of persecution was about. And now we have Ananias showing us again that the love of Jesus can conquer all, even someone like Saul. This is why I have always believed saints are not born...they are made.

And so, we can ask ourselves what does our discipleship of Jesus look like? What is the fruit of our discipleship...is it love or is it something else? Today is the feast day of St. Joseph the worker. St. Joseph of course models what it looks like to love and sacrifice for family even in the face of extreme hardship. Today, our Church in this country is also rededicating ourselves to

be under the protection and patronage of the Blessed Virgin Mary, Mother of the Church. It is happening at noon today. Check our website for how to participate with Archbishop Etienne's livestream. Mary, our Mother in faith, of course demonstrated with perfection what love looks like by giving the Author of Love his human nature in the incarnation. Our country need her protection now more than ever.

And so, what are the areas in our lives that could very well be on the road to Damascus? We are invited today to allow grace to work in our hearts like it did for Saul who became St. Paul. We are invited to find ways for our faith to express itself with love, like Ananias, St. Joseph the Worker and Mary our Mother in faith. The reason for this is because none of us can do this alone. We need Jesus, the bread that has come down from heaven, who is the way, the truth and the life.