

9.25.22: 26C

January 25th is the feast day of the Conversion of St. Paul. It was his personal wake up call with Jesus. God uses a variety of ways to awaken the soul. St. Paul got knocked off of his high horse and was blinded and 3 days later he could see physically and spiritually. Some people describe their conversion as getting knocked off their high horse or getting hit across the head with a 2x4. Some say their conversion took a life time. Or is taking a life time. But Whatever it takes for us to become spiritually alive God will allow it.

When Archbishop Coakley wrote his letter to the people of the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City it was dated January 25, Conversion of Saint Paul. That was clearly intentional. The name of his letter is: Go Make Disciples! Creating a Culture of Conversion and Discipleship for the Archdiocese of Oklahoma City. This letter is an exhortation. He clearly is urging us to go and do something. In it he says- The primary work of a spiritual life is to cooperate with God's grace. Which implies I can cooperate with God or be uncooperative with him. Cooperating with God is allow Him to sow seeds of faith through me; and the other option is to avoid interacting with him. On the cover of his letter is an impressionistic figure casting seeds into a plowed field. Cooperating with God means we sow the seeds and He provides the rest.

We mentioned last month that the parish and archdiocese has several options and opportunities to be involved and participate in discipleship, sowing, growing and making disciples. Friday afternoon the Catholic Woman's society met to honor those women who are doing exceptional work in the archdiocese. Friday Evening the Saints and Scholars event honored the Catholic School teacher of the the year. Constance Clark from Christ the King School was in the top three candidates. Next week Catholic Charities will be here to share some of the heroic life changing work that they provide for people who are in crisis or desperate need of assistance. October also has a number of opportunities, 5Krun/walk, the Rosary coast to coast, Cristo Rey High School faith talk, The Three Hearts pilgrimage in the Tulsa diocese, our parish Stewardship Fair, a Finance update. And then Dec. 4 our Parish Dream event.

Those are a few of the ways you can cast seeds and learn how to go make disciples. You dont have to do all those things but you have to do something. (Like they say at last call, You don't have to go home but you can't stay here.) The soul is like the body. If it becomes sedentary it becomes lethargic and the less engaged it is the more it atrophies. It's like a car, Whether you're a race car, sedan or a classic, if you leave it parked in the garage too long it starts to have problems. The spirit is meant to be driven and used for the purpose it was designed, which is to go.

In the first reading, the prophet Amos is really giving it out to these high society ladies who are just laying around not doing anything. A prophet like Amos, is someone who states the obvious. Like if a society eats excess sugar you are going to have a culture of diabetes. They say out loud what we need to hear. Amos says these Jewish princesses are consumed with pleasure, comfort, and convenience. For them life is grand. But he calls them fat cows just laying around all day. They have become lukewarm in their concern for others and mediocre in their social and religious obligations. He says they will be the

first ones to be hauled off at the beginning of the Babylonian exile because they are so consumed with themselves and not aware of the danger they are in. They are so disengaged with the people and world around them. A pagan non Believing culture is about to take over and they will be enslaved because of their own complacency.

This should sound alarmingly familiar to us. Fr. Mike Schmitz says we are in exile anytime we are away from God. The Babylonians of today are the extremists in our culture. To do nothing, to be lukewarm in our faith, leaves us in danger of being enslaved and hauled away into places that not only take away our joys and comforts but causes emotional and spiritual deterioration. Like the rich man in the Gospel. He didn't have a name because he was rich, he was nameless because he didn't care. He was nice enough. But nice is not enough. Lazarus The poor man had a name because he knew he was beloved by God even with his skin disease and starvation. He was a prophet for all those who are overlooked and ignored.

The overlooked and the invisible are all around us. Wearing a Roman collar gets you into places that some people would not be expected to go, like the back of a restaurant where you can go surprise the dishwasher and cook with a heartfelt thank you, or the hospital or nursing home after hours to pray with the sick and then say Thank You to the overworked staff. But you don't have to wear a collar to be a priest or a prophet or even a king.

When you were anointed at your baptism, you were given your credentials. Your spiritual passport was stamped as a priest, a prophet and a king. You are authorized to worship, proclaim and lead. You have the full authority as a disciple of Jesus Christ to go and pray with the sick, to acknowledge the Lazarus' in our world, to treat people like they belong here and they are beloved. Being lukewarm in our faith leads to complacency and then emotional enslavement.

Exercising your faith empowers you in the common priesthood of believers to praise God and worship Him (in awe and wonder.) To prophesy the truth with courage, like Amos. (but maybe not call people a fat cow.) And then to lead like a king, Your job as the laity is to get involved, change public opinion and be a light to your corner of the world. Get on a public school board, write your legislator or run for office. Being lukewarm is good for cheese and fruit but not for faith. Who are the potential disciples around my life?

Lord inflame my desire to care more for them so they will learn about You.