

November 2019

You shall be my witnesses - Acts 1:8

Second reflection in the three-part series – To be a missionary

Reflection:

Pope Francis' reflection on the witness of St. Stephen and our call to emulate it motivates our meditation. "Christianity is not a school of ideas or a collection of beautiful churches and lovely art; it is a living people who follow Jesus and give witness to him every day. Am I a Christian giving witness to Jesus or am I a simple numerary of this sect, unable to let the Holy Spirit drive me forward in my Christian vocation? A Christian who doesn't give witness is unfathomable. Giving witness always bears fruit, whether it is just one's daily witness to Christ, witness during very difficult times, during persecution, or a witness that ends with death. Christians who don't give to others the new life they've been given by Christ remain 'sterile'. It is the Holy Spirit who makes us strong in order to take the path of witness".

The beauty of a Christian witness expresses the beauty of Christianity and provides for its future. How can we be credible in announcing the "good news" if our lives don't reveal its "beauty"? (The Via Pulchritudinis III.3). "A saint is the one who is so fascinated by the beauty of God and by his perfect truth that he is progressively transformed by it. For this beauty and this truth, he is ready to renounce everything, even himself." (Pope Benedict XVI). This inner transforming action of the Holy Spirit raises up authentic witnesses who can declare to the world the beauty of being known by the Lord and knowing Him personally. Such a person can joyfully declare like St. John "We declare to you what was from the beginning, what we have heard, what we have seen with our eyes, what we have looked at and touched with our hands" (1 Jn 1:1).

Pope St John Paul II counted on ecclesial movements in raising up individuals with strong testimonials. "There is an urgent need for a strong testimony and a Christian formation that is solid and deep". It is this strong testimony that we as Jesus Youth are called to provide in our homes and neighbourhood, campuses and schools, cities and villages, workplaces and sports arenas. Authentic, joyful witnessing prepares the hearts of those around to receive the proclamation of the Good News.

So what is the greatest hindrance in witnessing this beauty that we experience in Christ? Is it not fear? The fear of rejection from friends and family, fear of being ridiculed, fear of not being able to convince others who ask questions? But we are not alone. Fear was the greatest stumbling block for the apostles too. It was the power and presence of the Holy Spirit who broke through their fears (Acts 1:8, 4:31) and emboldened them to be His witnesses. That same Spirit will empower us too, if we allow Him.

As a baptised Christian, I am His witness. Knowingly or unknowingly, the way I live prepares the way for my neighbour to meet Christ or reject Christ. Instead of cringing away from this huge responsibility, let us surrender to His grace that equips us. The beauty of a heart that is kissed by God daily will be evident in the way we relate to those around us; our compassion, selflessness, simplicity, care and concern, boldness and fidelity to gospel values makes the unseen God real to others. A person who is convinced, enthusiastic, certain and in love can usually convince anybody. Yes, let us confidently treasure these words of Jesus in our hearts and gratefully live it out. "You shall receive power when the Holy Spirit has come upon you and you shall be my witnesses"

Saint Quote:

"We must all try to be preachers through our deeds" - Saint Teresa of Ávila

