

"..we may present every man mature in Christ"

Col 1:28

Monthly Reflection:

December 2022

Through the parable of the lost sheep, Jesus conveys that there is nothing that surpasses the greatness and dignity of a human person who is created in the image and likeness of God. Leaving the ninety-nine healthy sheep in the open country to look for the one lost sheep, may seem ridiculous and foolish to our rational selves. Yet for the lost sheep, it is this seemingly irrational act of the shepherd that paints fresh colours of hope on its mind, which may have been on the verge of despair. As it is gently rocked on the shoulder of the shepherd on their way back to the fold, perhaps it wonders, "Am I so precious and valuable to my shepherd?" We see in fact, that in God's eyes, he is priceless and worth being sought out, nurtured, and brought back to the fold, to become the best version of himself.

In many ways, St Paul, like the good shepherd, went to great extremes to bring the light of Christ to others. This month we reflect on St. Paul's apt summary of his work - "Him (Christ) we proclaim, warning everyone and teaching everyone with all wisdom, that we may present everyone mature in Christ. For this I toil, struggling with all his energy that he powerfully works within me" (Col 1:28-29).

Paul has seen his brothers with the eye of the Good Shepherd and grasped the value and hidden potential within each person. He warns and teaches 'everyone' with a keen desire to present each person mature in Christ. Pope St John Paul II in his encyclical *Redemptor Hominis* points out, "We are dealing with "each" man, for each one is included in the mystery of the Redemption and with each one Christ has united himself forever through this mystery" (RH,13). Paul can see this hope of glory, namely Christ, in each person (v 27). He knows what man can evolve into if he cooperates with Him who lent himself for each one of them.

The Jesus Youth movement invites all of us this month to ask how we are cooperating in conforming ourselves to Christ. Our greatest responsibility to ourselves is to mature in Christ, just as an acorn is called to mature into an oak tree. Using our unique set of

strengths and limitations, our calling is to become wholly unique Christ-like persons. If we doubt the uniqueness of our call, we only need to look at the saints! A striking example can be found in the three saintly Teresas - Teresa of Avila, Therese of Lisieux and Mother Teresa - who were so similar, yet so wildly unlike one another.

Only when we embrace this unique call to maturity can we discover and live out the full meaning of our existence. To be the masterpiece God wants us to be, we may need to heed St Catherine of Sienna's exhortation: "God has made you a gardener, to root out vice and plant virtue." And we have the benefit of a true helper in the Holy Spirit, who is the protagonist of this entire process.

The Jesus Youth formation platform helps each one of us in this journey, which begins with a Jesus encounter experience, matures into discipleship and yields fruits through being a missionary. A focused and intentional inner journey with Christ helps us in ordering our emotions and desires, illuminates our intellect and reason, and then guides our wills and enables our hearts to perceive God's will. When equipped with missionary skills, such a disciple becomes a strong agent in the hands of the Spirit.

The same Spirit will also urge us to fan into flame this incredible potential in our neighbours. A loving and praying community is a blessing for a person who longs to be formed in a place where he can belong, be vulnerable, receive and give help, and where holy habits are taught as well as caught. This formation month calls each one of us to proclaim Christ and to warn and teach ourselves and others as St. Paul did. For the love of each person in our small community, let us toil to draw out the best in them. Then we will not just build up individuals, but we will slowly build up a movement that reflects the heart of Christ, 'who longs that everyone will be saved and come to the knowledge of the truth' (cf. 1 Tim 2:4). Let us, therefore, pray unceasingly and toil tirelessly, so that every Jesus Youth may realise the possibility that God has deposited in him and take responsibility for its maturing into a tree that houses all the fruits that Christ desires to bear in and through us.

