

“Who do you say I am?”

(Matthew 16.15)

(MATTHEW 16. 13-20, MARK 8. 27-30, LUKE 9. 18-21))

TRINITY 11 – YEAR A – 27th AUGUST 2017- SPRINGLINE PARISH

Introduction

The gospel reading this morning is one of my favourites. The question that Jesus asks his disciples is of fundamental significance. Only if we can answer this question fully can we become true Christians. I often like to ask people especially in groups etc the very same question of Jesus: *Who do you say I am?* And each one had an answer of who Jesus was to them.

I am going to ask a few of you the same question. If Jesus were to ask you, *Who do you say I am* what would you say? (Pass the mike around)

Personal Experience:

About 20 or so years ago I was in a rather difficult time in my life and I decided to do a one-month Ignatian retreat often called “The Spiritual Exercises”. I made this retreat in a picturesque place outside Rome at a place called Colli Albani - these are the hills that surround Rome and have been in the past a favourite place for the Romans to escape the heat of Rome in summer. I made my one month retreat at a place called Nemi and overlooking the house where I stayed was the beautiful lake of Nemi. Now to cut a long story short, the main focus of the retreat was for each of the participants of the retreat to put himself or herself before Christ and to answer that question *Who do I say that I am*. We had to give a personal answer to the question, write it down and reflect over it. We had to mean what we wrote.

The most important question in life:

This is, according to me, the biggest and most important question that anyone can answer. Our lives as human beings and especially as Christians depend on the type of answer that we give to this question.

It is important to note that first Jesus asked his disciples, *who do people say I am?* But he personalised the question further with *Who do you say I am.* It is as if Jesus is not satisfied with what others think of him; *he is interested what you think of him.* He wants to know whether you believe in him.

A Muslim or a Jew might say, 'Jesus is a prophet'. A Hindu might say, 'Jesus is a holy man'. An atheist might say, 'Jesus is a good man'. Someone might say something else. That is all fine but not for a Christian - *you have to give a personal answer to his question. Who do you say I am?*

The need for a genuine conversion - An example

“What good is it to gain the whole world, yet forfeit, lose your soul? (36)”

This is the phrase that brought about the conversion of Francis Xavier. Both Francis and Ignatius were students in Paris and both came from noble families. Ignatius had a stint in fighting as a soldier but had finally given his heart to Christ. Francis was a typical young man enjoying life to the full while also studying at the University of Paris.

Ignatius used to accost him and every once in a while used to quote these words from the New Testament, *What good is it for a man to gain the whole world, yet forfeit his soul* which not only led to his conversion of Francis but also his vocation and mission as a priest and the greatest missionary after saint Paul.

Conversion is a revelation of meaning of what life is all about
Metanoia – it is a total change of mind, attitude.

The Personal Decision

“The discovery of the right way to follow Christ is always the result of personal decision. And the personal responsibility for this decision which cannot be pushed off on a moral book or a spiritual director, is an essential element in our imitation of Christ. Therefore, we must risk the loneliness of this kind of existential decision.”

(Karl Rahner)

[ST Mattapally]