Spirituality
Pencil Preaching





by Pat Marrin

View Author Profile
patrickjmarrin@gmail.com.

Join the Conversation

Send your thoughts to *Letters to the Editor*. Learn more

May 11, 2020
Share on BlueskyShare on FacebookShare on TwitterEmail to a friendPrint



“It is necessary for us to undergo many hardships to enter the Kingdom of God” (Acts 14:24).

Acts 14:19-28; John 14:17-31

Paul is stoned during his missionary trip with Barnabas, a brutal form of rejection after being feted as a god in a previous town for healing a cripple. Paul recounts it among the many beatings and floggings, shipwrecks and imprisonments he suffered for preaching the Gospel. Acts records that after being dragged outside the town and left for dead, Paul got up and re-entered the city, a show of bravado that no doubt became part of his reputation as a fearless missionary.

Paul was driven by the force of his conversion as a persecutor of the church and by his deep confidence that as long as he preached the Gospel, Jesus would give him the strength he needed to complete his calling. He had what Jesus promised all the disciples, a peace the world could not give. This reassurance in the face of persecution was no doubt a factor in the dramatic spread of Christianity. Martyrdom was, in the words of Tertullian, the seed of conversion, as the pagans witnessed disciples standing up to Rome for their faith even at the cost of their lives.

Shalom is the Hebrew word for the kind of peace Jesus offered. It meant wholeness, completeness, harmony and total well-being. Because it was God's gift, it could not be taken away or disrupted by human uncertainty or chance. It was like beatitude compared with happiness. Your blessing is not dependent of things going well or any happenstance. Even in the midst of trial and suffering, *shalom* grounds you in a relationship with God. It is like the "perfect joy" of St. Francis of Assisi. Every obstacle or frustration he enountered was another chance to trust in God and to give thanks.

We all experience some anxiety as part of daily life, and few possess self-confidence that cannot be ruffled by the ups and downs of personal relationships and the losses and disappointments that come with being human. Maintaining peace within ourselves often depends on being productive and having the approval of others. Yet, even when these sources of equilibrium and self-satisfaction fail us, the *Shalom* of the risen Christ is the deep calm that comes from knowing that we are loved no matter what. If we need not fear death, the worst thing that can happen, then what should we fear?

Easter faith becomes a way of life and a habit of being when we remain in the intimate conversation with Jesus that is prayer. St. Paul counsels us to "pray always," to keep Jesus before our eyes and his voice in our hearts. "Nothing can separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus" (Rom 8;39).

Advertisement