

## SPIRITUAL LIFE

### Fourth Sunday of Easter

By: Fr. Bob

Dietrich Bonhoeffer, a Lutheran theologian, educator, author and pastor who was martyred during the Nazi regime because of his faith and total commitment to Christ, once wrote, “Cheap grace is the preaching of forgiveness without requiring repentance.....Cheap grace is grace without discipleship, grace without the cross, grace without Jesus Christ, living and incarnate. Costly grace is the treasure hidden in a field... and the pearl of great price for which one will gladly go and sell all that they have... Costly grace is the call of Jesus Christ at which the disciple leaves his nets and follows him.”

As we continue to celebrate Easter we have models of people who lived lives of full commitment—people who practiced costly grace. The lives of Paul and Barnabas as well as the lives of many who lived in those early years of Christianity were examples of people who daily chose to be faithful to the Gospel of Jesus Christ.

Our first reading from the Acts of the Apostles as well as the reading from the Book of Revelation takes place in a tumultuous time. During the reign of the Emperor Nero, hostilities against believers in Jesus escalated. In July 64 C.E. a third of the city was destroyed by fire. The Roman historian Tacitus recorded in his final Annals that in order to escape suspicion of having started the fires to further his rebuilding projects, Nero found scapegoats among the people “hated for their crimes, the mob called Christians.” Peter and Paul were martyred during Nero’s reign of terror.

In addition Paul insisted on preaching first to the Jewish community. And many of them became followers of Jesus. They didn’t necessarily leave their Jewish tradition—but followed Him. But when this threatened the status quo—when this New Way seemed to undermine the power that were—the leaders of the Jewish community began to attempt to get rid of Paul and Barnabas and any others who would preach this way.

And so Paul proclaims that the way is not exclusive but rather is for all. He quotes from Isaiah that this way would be a light for all the nations and a means of salvation to the ends of earth. In other words it would be for all who would accept it, a means to eternal life. And of course this was turning the tables and altering the course—and it made Paul and Barnabas and the rest not too popular with the guardians of the ways things were.

So we see that Paul and Barnabas and any who would be faithful to the Gospel—to the Shepherd—had a difficult

road. But they believed in that costly grace. They could not be lukewarm. They had to embrace the message of Jesus totally—and that would come with a price. Because their ears were tuned to the message of the Shepherd they heard differently and walked in a unique way. They stood out—they challenged those about them.

That reminds us of a person who walked differently and embraced what he believed wholly. May 6 marks the day that Henry David Thoreau, the naturalist and social critic died in 1862.

Although Thoreau subscribed to no organized religion, there was in him something of the Taoist sage and the desert father. He like Paul and Barnabas and others who lived fully felt an intense need to dispense with socially defined values and instead to experience life “first hand.” It was this desire that led him in 1845 to his famous retreat to Walden Pond, near Concord, Massachusetts. There he sought to escape a world in which “the mass of men lead lives of quiet desperation.” He said: “I went to the woods because I wished to live deliberately, to front only the essential facts of life and see if I could not learn what it had to teach, and not, when I came to die, discover that I have not lived.” Walden Pond for Thoreau, as the desert was for ascetics desert dwellers was not an escape but a place to embrace the opportunity for inner discovery. “There are continents and seas in the moral world to which every man is an isthmus or an inlet, yet unexplored by him.” This sojourn of two years at Walden was his opportunity to listen to the voice calling him so that he might live fully and authentically. He was listening to his own Shepherd.

One of the results of this was his realization that he couldn’t abide with slavery in his nation. And even though Massachusetts was “free state” he said he found it intolerable to live in a country in which slavery was permitted.

“How does it become a man to behave toward this American government today? I answer that he cannot without disgrace be associated with it. I cannot for an instant recognize that political organization as my government which is the slave’s government also.”

His fight against slavery landed him in jail for a short time. But the real result was his essay “On the Duty of Civil Disobedience.” In it he said that, “Under a government which imprisons any unjustly, the true place for a just man is also a prison.”

## READINGS OF THE WEEK

Acts 13:43-52

Revelations 7:9-17

John 10:27-30

April 21, 2013

# 靈 修 生 活

## 善 牧 的 帶 領

曾 慶 導 神 父

在今天的讀經裡，我們看到復活的基督的聖神，透過祂的教會（如讀經一中的保祿和巴爾納伯），繼續牧放祂的羊群，羊群的數目不斷增加，不單最初被召選的猶太人，而且各邦國、各支派、各民族、各語言的人，都獲得了復活的主所賜予的永生，在天國生命的水泉那裡，不會再忍飢受渴，也不會受烈日和任何炎熱的損傷……（讀經二）

在今天慶祝基督作善牧、教會作代牧的讀經裡，我們也體認到不是所有的人都願意隨從善牧的引導。今天的第一篇讀經，安提約基亞的猶太人因嫉妒而辱罵迫害保祿和巴爾納伯，因此失去了聖道，與永生絕緣（當著他們的面踩下腳上塵土的意思）。由於猶太人的心硬，保祿和巴爾納伯便將傳教工作轉向外邦人，這是保祿傳教生涯的第一個轉捩點，我們都是這轉捩後的受惠人。

天主一直帶領著教會的發展。保祿宗徒傳教的另一個重要的轉捩點，是在宗十六 6-10 裡記載的：耶穌的神阻止他們往東方的亞細亞講道，並在夜間的異象裡召叫他們往西方的馬其頓（希臘地區）宣傳福音，保祿馬上就去了。之後的一切也成了歷史：福音傳播的路線從亞洲的巴勒斯坦到西方的歐洲，十多世紀後再從歐洲藉著傳教士的腳步傳回亞洲大陸，包括中國、台灣。

從信仰的角度看來，繞了這個大圈絕不是偶然的，是基督善牧的帶領，天主知道祂在做什麼。今天我們用「後見之明」可以領略到為什麼天主這樣安排。「道成肉身」的耶穌基督成了天主愛人的最高表達，也成了基督宗教的信仰中心。但要理智地表達出那能拯救人的耶穌基督必須是真人又是真神，特別是與思想界、知識界的人交談時，必須用形上學的概念和詞彙，去釐清與表達耶穌基督的「一位二性」，要做到這一點，非靠希臘哲學不可。東方哲學要從形上學來表達一位二性的概念，是能力不足的，熟識東西方哲學的人都清楚這一點。

但基督信仰的真理並非如今天一些人說的，屈服於希臘哲學，成了希臘哲學的產物。其實剛好相反，教會改造了希臘哲學，利用了希臘哲學來表達福音的真理。有一個很好的例子：第四世紀的亞略異端正是屈服於希臘哲學思想，把耶穌基督看作是希臘哲學中不神不人的中介（在希臘哲學中，絕對超越的「神」Monas 絕無可能與受造界、物質界有任何接觸，所以需要有一個非神非人的中介 Nous）。但尼西亞大公會議（325 年）按聖經的啓示，堅決拒絕了亞略異端，毫不妥協地宣認耶穌基督是與天父同性同體，以及與人同性同體的真天主真人（我們每主日彌撒宣認的信經是第一式即是「尼西亞信經」）！換言之，「一位二性」所表達的內涵不是來自希臘哲學，而是耶穌在聖經裡的啓示，教會改造了希臘哲學來服務啓示的真理。

教會的信仰道理是主耶穌啓示給我們的，並不是猶太人、希臘人或歐洲人想像發明的。第一代的猶太基督徒，從道成肉身的主耶穌那裡直接獲得這些啓示真理，然後藉由教會的宣講傳給後代，先傳到歐洲，再傳回亞洲。但先得到的不一定居先，後得到的不一定居後。重要的是，獲得信仰之後，如何按照已得的信仰生活，並保持信仰至死不渝。我們希望有悠久基督宗教歷史的歐洲不會失落這珍貴的精神遺產，也希望接受信仰時間稍短的亞洲人不會蔑視這份珍貴的禮物。

西方傳教士將基督的信仰帶給亞洲，多多少少跟歐洲對亞洲的殖民主義有點關係。因著所在國的殖民主義政策，外國傳教士才有交通工具來到亞洲，雖然某些西方傳教士有種族主義的弊端，但無可否認，絕大部分的傳教士是好的，爲了愛主、愛人，傳佈福音不辭辛勞。我們不該以反對西方殖民主義的心態來反對這些傳教士，更不該因此否定由他們傳來的福音信仰。福音從巴勒斯坦傳到歐洲一千多年來，自然有了不少歐洲文化的「包裝」。對這些歐洲文化的包裝，我們東方人也要有智慧取其精華，去其糟粕，因爲並不是所有西方的包裝都是不好的。無論如何，包裝裡面的基督福音內涵是「今在、昔在、永在」的不變真理，那才是應該接受的。接受這聖道，才配得永生（讀經一）。

摘自「教友生活週刊」

## 本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 三 年 四 月 廿 一 日

宗 13:43-52 ; 默 7:9-17 ; 若 10:27-30