

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Time to Begin

By: Fr. Munachi E. Ezeopu, CSSP

Matty, believes he should be a soul winner for Christ. In the parish Bible class he has learnt how to share faith with people and lead them to Christ. But he has never done it. Matty prays to God to give him a sign so that he would know exactly when to start. One day Matty is travelling in the subway to meet his Bible study friends. He has his Bible in his handbag. A young man about his own age enters the train and sits next to Matty. He wears a T-shirt with the slogan, "WHO HAS THE MOST TOYS WINS." Matty bends his head and says a little prayer, "Lord give me a sign when to start." The young man's cell phone rings. His friends wants him to come pick him up. After arguing with his friends awhile, he says, "All right, I will come to the church and pick you up, but I will not enter the church. You will find me at the parking lot," and hangs up. Matty bends his head a second time and prays, "Lord, I'm still waiting for the sign!" Finally, the young man turns to Matty and says, You know, I got this weird friend who skips work on Sundays to go to church. I don't get it." Matty smiles, bends down his head once again and says, "Lord, the sign, the sign!" End of story.

Today's gospel is on Jesus beginning his public work. After living a private life for more than thirty years, how did Jesus know exactly when to end the hidden life and begin his public work? Our first thoughts are to suppose that, of course, God his Father spoke to him and communicated to him exactly when to begin. He got a special green light from God. But today's gospel suggests that Jesus probably arrived at this decision the way most people do, that is, by inferring from the things happening in their lives what God is trying to say to them.

Our gospel reading begins, "**When Jesus heard that John had been arrested, he withdrew to Galilee. He left Nazareth and made his home in Capernaum by the sea**" (Matthew 4:12-13). Jesus hears that John had been arrested. He figures that the renewal movement that John started would be needing new leader. He looks around and find that none is more

suitable to assume to assume leadership of the movement than himself. That's it. That is all the sign he needs. He says farewell to his family and moves on to meet the challenges of his public calling. Unlike Matty in our story, Jesus does not sit there and wait for a special supernatural sign from above. Rather, Jesus learns to read the "signs of the times," that is, to infer from the goings-on in the world around him what God might be saying of him.

What needs do we see in the world around us? Do you, for example see the need for more messengers of God's love and peace in our world today? What can you personally do about it, given the personal circumstances of your life? When are you actually going to start doing something about it, or are you, like Matty, waiting for a special sign from God? Well, that sign may never come. We, like Jesus, must learn to read the "signs of the times" in which we live.

Note that Jesus does not start preaching immediately. If he had started preaching right away from his home town in Nazareth, they would probably have silenced him there and then. The first things he does is to look for a location and a community that would support his vocation. He finds it in Capernaum where he quickly attracts a group of friends and disciples. Even though he is the son of God, Jesus does not work like a lone ranger. He shares his vision and his ministry with people. That is why, even though he was stopped and killed just three years after, they could not stop his work and his vision for a new world of sisters and brothers. In Jesus we see not only what I means to do God's work but also how to do God's work.

Let us ask God today to give us the wisdom to read the "signs" of our own times so that we can correctly infer from events in the world around us what demands God is making of us, as individuals and as a church. And let us ask for the courage to start doing it, not just praying about it.

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Isaiah 9:1-4

1 Corinthians 1:10-18

Matthew 4:12-23

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靈 修 生 活

你 們 悔 改 吧！ 因 為 天 國 臨 近 了

戴 邁 樂 著

且想像你有一台收音機，不管如何調轉頻道，都只能收聽到一個電台，而且無法控制音量的大小。聲音有時小得幾乎聽不見，有時大得震耳欲聾。再者，你無法關掉它。它有時速度變慢，而當你想休息睡覺時又突然高聲鳴放。你會說，誰能容忍這種收音機呢？然而，當你的心靈表現如這台收音機般的瘋狂時，你不僅忍耐得住，還認為是正常的。

想想有多少次，你被情緒折騰得七葷八素、遭受生氣、挫折、憂慮的痛苦，無非為了眷戀於某些你想擁有而未能擁有的事物，或是把持著已有的東西不放，或者是躲避你不願之事。你愛上某人，又覺得受拒或嫉妒；突然間，你的全部心思都集中在這一件事上，生命宴席的其他佳餚你全食之無味。你一心一意要贏得選舉，在選戰的喧囂聲中，絕聽不見鳥兒的歌聲；你的野心淹沒過其他的聲音。你擔心可能罹患重症，或失去所愛之人，其他的事全引不起你的興趣。

簡言之，在你拾起依戀的當時，你那可愛的心靈隨即失去效能。想修理好收音機，就必須研究它內部機械的原理。想要重整內心，你必須認真深思下面四項能夠使你自由的真理。但首先請先選取一些煩擾你的依戀、令你畏懼的事物、任何渴求的願望，暫且將它們存置於心，然後諦聽下面的真理。

第一：你必須在依戀和快樂之間作一抉擇。兩者不可能兼得。在拾起依戀的當刻，你的內心便注定要受傷害，你不再有能力過著快樂安詳的生活。比照一下自己的經驗，是否果真如此呢？

第二：依戀從何而來？你並不是生來便帶著它。它起源於一個謊言，一個社會、文化、或你自己所告訴你的謊言：缺少了某事、某人，你絕不可能快樂。請打開你的眼睛，看清其中的謬誤。有多少人並未擁有那些事物和人，不也過得極為快樂。所以，你可以作過選擇：要依戀還是要自由快樂？

第三：如果你想充分活出生命，就必須發展出一種整體觀。生命本身遠遠大過你所戀惜的瑣事。稱之為「瑣事」一點也沒錯，如果你活得夠久，終有一天，任何你所戀惜的事都會變得不重要，甚至被你遺忘——你的經驗應能肯定這點。正如同今天你幾乎已忘記，也不再受那些過去十分煩擾你的「重大」瑣事的影響。

第四點是必然有的結論：你自身以外的人或事沒有能力左右你的快樂。不管你是否有所意識，能夠決定你快樂與否，決定是否還要緊抓依戀不放的是你自己，且只有你。

沈思以上四點真理後，你也許會意識到內心正在反抗或辯駁，拒絕深入反省。這表示你被依戀折磨得還不夠，還不想動手修理你的心靈收音機。或者你一點也不排拒這些真理；果真如此，那就歡悅歌詠吧。因為悔改，亦即心靈的改變業已開始，而天主的國度——屬於赤子的自在無慮的生活——終於近在咫尺，它即將屬你所有。

摘自「愛的冥想」鄭重熙譯

本 週 讀 經

二 零 一 四 年 一 月 廿 六 日

依 9:1-4; 格 前 1:10-18; 瑪 4:12-23