

# God's Voice Within

## I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

### FIRST READING (Acts 13:14,43-52)

*Paul and Barnabas at the synagogue, on a sabbath*

<sup>14</sup>They continued on from Perga and reached Antioch in Pisidia. On the sabbath they entered (into) the synagogue and took their seats.

*After the evangelization of the Jews and worshippers*

<sup>43</sup>After the congregation had dispersed, many Jews and worshippers who were converts to Judaism followed Paul and Barnabas, who spoke to them and urged them to remain faithful to the grace of God.

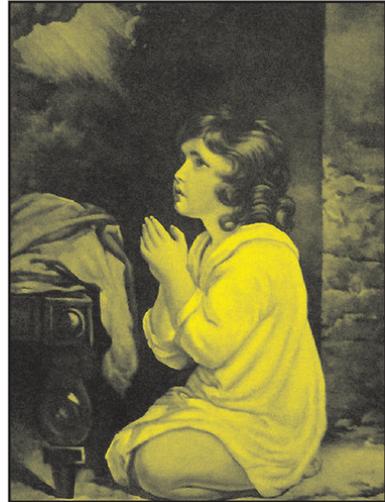
*Paul and Barnabas on the following sabbath (reaction of Jews / Gentiles)*

<sup>44</sup>On the following sabbath almost the whole city gathered to **hear the word of the Lord**. <sup>45</sup>When the Jews saw the crowds, they were filled with jealousy and with violent abuse contradicted what Paul said. <sup>46</sup>Both Paul and Barnabas spoke out boldly and said, "It was necessary that **the word of God** be spoken to you first, but since you reject it and condemn yourselves as unworthy of eternal life, we now turn to the Gentiles." <sup>47</sup>"For so the Lord has commanded us, 'I have made you a light to the Gentiles, that you may be an instrument of salvation to the ends of the earth.'"

<sup>48</sup>The Gentiles were delighted when they heard this and glorified the **word of the Lord**. All who were destined for eternal life came to believe, <sup>49</sup>and the **word of the Lord** continued to spread through the whole region. <sup>50</sup>The Jews, however, incited the women of prominence who were worshippers and the leading men of the city, stirred up a persecution against Paul and Barnabas, and expelled them from their territory.

*Departure of Paul and Barnabas*

<sup>51</sup>So they shook the dust from their feet in protest against them and went to Iconium.\* <sup>52</sup>The disciples were filled with joy and the holy Spirit.



**THE FOCUS: The Spread of the Word of the Lord.**

### COMMENTARY

- v.14 provides the setting for the evangelization of Paul and Barnabas: synagogue, sabbath, Antioch in Pisidia.
- v.43 indicates that some hearers (Jews and worshippers) are attracted to Paul and Barnabas, who encourage them to stay put in their faith (grace of God).
- v.44 indicates a much bigger crowd, audience, to hear the word of God.
- Bigger crowds provoke jealousy among the Jews. The Jews contradict the preaching of Paul and Barnabas (v.45).
- In v.46, all the more Paul and Barnabas become bold in stating their mission: to preach to the Jews but since they reject the Word of God, now they turn to the Gentiles.
- v.48 speaks positively of the Gentiles, for their favorable response. They were delighted, they glorified the word of God.

### REFLECTIONS

Paul and Barnabas are apostles (though they did not see the earthly Jesus). They preach to the Jews and Gentiles the word of God.

They make use of the usual meeting place (synagogue) and the day of worship (sabbath). Paul and Barnabas do not invent another place or schedule. They approach where the people are.

Paul and Barnabas preach nothing else but the word of God.

They encounter jealousy from the Jews, for drawing more people to themselves (to the faith).

Persecution is the result of preaching the word of God. Some people will not understand or even contradict, but preaching must go on. For many come to believe. Courage is what it takes to advance the reign of God.

- Great multitude (v.9), countless from all kinds of nations, races, peoples and languages.
- Standing before the throne and Lamb (Jesus) (beatific vision).
- V.14b indicates their heroism, the reason for standing before the throne.
- Great is the reward: = heaven
- They will be sheltered by the Lamb.
- No more hunger and thirst.
- The sun or heat will not affect them.
- They will be shepherded and led to life-giving waters.
- No more sadness.

## REFLECTIONS

It pays to die as martyrs to our faith.

The reading assures us of the great reward.

The reading consoles those sincere Christians who are suffering from persecution because they take to heart the Christian message.

The martyrs will share in the victory of Christ.

A Christian follower is not authentic and true when one avoids sufferings, conflicts, inconveniences and the like.

Comfort will come only after we have accomplished our mission.

Take note of the increase of Christian martyrs (through the preaching of the word of God, not through gimmickry).

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**RESPONSORIAL PSALM** (Ps100:1-2, 3, 5)  
**WE ARE HIS PEOPLE, THE SHEEP OF HIS FLOCK. Or, ALLELUIA.**

**SECOND READING** (Rev 7:9, 14b-17)

*Vision of great multitude (martyrs)*

<sup>9</sup>After this I had a vision of a **great multitude**, which no one could count, from every nation, race, people, and tongue.

*Faithful suffering martyrdom*

They stood before the throne and before the Lamb, wearing white robes and holding palm branches\* in their hands. He said to me, **“These are the ones who have survived the time of great distress;\* they have washed their robes and made them white in the blood of the Lamb./**

*The reward of the martyrs*

<sup>15</sup>“For this reason **they** stand before God’s throne/ and worship him day and night in his temple./ The one who sits on the throne will shelter **them./** <sup>16e</sup>They will not hunger or thirst anymore,/ nor will the sun or any heat strike **them./** <sup>17f</sup>For the Lamb who is in the center of the throne will shepherd **them/** and lead **them** to springs of life-giving water,\*/ and God will wipe away every tear from **their eyes.”**

**THE FOCUS: On the Martyrs, Christian Witnesses who Died for their Faith**

## COMMENTARY

• The text describes the destiny of the faithful ones who suffer martyrdom because of their faith.

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**GOSPEL READING** (Jn 10:27-30)

<sup>27</sup>My sheep hear **my voice**; I know them, and they follow me. <sup>28p</sup>I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. <sup>29q</sup>My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all,\* and no one can take them out of the Father’s hand. <sup>30\*</sup> <sup>r</sup>The Father and I are one.”

**THE FOCUS: Reward to Those who Hear Jesus’ Voice.**

## COMMENTARY

- The text concentrates on the **reward** of those who hear the voice of God.
- The rewards are:
  - Eternal life (v.28).

- Can never be lost (v.28).
- Always with the Father (v.29).
- The text is very short. It allows us to concentrate on its focus.
- Its focus is on the promise and reward of eternal life.

## REFLECTIONS

Christians are likened to a sheep as Jesus is likened to a shepherd. The sacred writings use similies or metaphors to enhance their message.

One characteristic of a Christian is that of being able to recognize the voice of God (Jesus, the pastor).

Hearing His voice is not a matter of casual hearing, like hearing of sounds and music, but attentive listening, being attuned to the voice of God whether it is loud or soft.

The voice of God leads to pasture (satisfaction, direction and security).

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## II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

Our message of our readings seem to be up in the air. In common, they speak of the **heavenly reward**:

Salvation in the First Reading. Standing before the throne in the Second Reading, and Eternal life in the Gospel Reading.

Well, the preacher should not be ashamed or afraid to preach eternal reward (salvation, heaven) because this is our destiny. It is the crowning end of our faith and active responses to God.

Yes, it affirms that Jesus, the risen Lord, is now in heaven, sitting on his throne, worshipped by angels, etc. and is with his followers who took seriously the way of the cross as the way to salvation.

### How to develop your homily

Tell a story when you first received an award. How did it feel? What did you do to deserve that award?

Today's readings speak of the reward given to Christians who generously respond to their

calling.

Our calling is to **listen** to the word of God. (*First Reading*)

Our calling is to **die as martyrs** to our faith (*Second Reading*).

Our calling is to **listen to the voice of God** (Gospel Reading).

Our reward is something to look forward to. We are not following Jesus, listening to his voice for nothing.

Our reward is nothing else than salvation, eternal life, beatific vision, like with God in heaven (review your catechism)

The readings remind us to stretch out our minds, from too much concern for this life to the life that awaits us, who do his will (listen to his voice, to his words).

Too much concern for this life (materialism, consumerism, vanity, politics, sports, recreations, etc., hedonism, looking only for enjoyment here and now) can cloud our higher concern, that is, to attain salvation.

Being active in the church does not assure us of our salvation. Let us make sure that we are doing right in our involvement in the church (through on-going formation).

Of course, we do not work for our salvation. It is God who saves us, not ourselves.

As a response to his offer and gift of salvation, we have to listen to his voice, hear his words and die for him.

Precisely Jesus is now in heaven, on his throne because he represented God. He listened to the voice of the Father.

In this eucharist, again Jesus promises eternal life to those who receive him. The eucharist is the culminating point of our willingness and eagerness to listen to the word of God, to listen to his voice and to die as martyrs to our faith.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

## III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Today is Good Shepherd Sunday and World Day of Prayer for Vocations.
2. How is shepherding of each other made concrete in our parish life? (HM)