

Commentary on the Gospel for Fri, Apr 22nd 2016

A few years ago, when I was in training to become a priest, I remember a talk given by a dynamic nun who spoke about her work amongst the tribal people of North India. As this petite lady went around on her bicycle conscientizing the poor marginalized villagers about their rights, she incurred the wrath of powerful and wealthy landlords who opposed anyone disturbing the status quo. Even when the threats to her life came, she continued her advocacy. There was an inner power that gave her the strength and courage to face her fears and passionately reach out to the people she was missioned to help.

This Easter season, we have been reading about the acts of the Holy Spirit who works in marvelous ways. As we continue reading Luke's story of Paul's mission to the nations, we see the Spirit working in their preaching and in the conversions that take place. Paul and Barnabas are commissioned for missionary service to Antioch (Jerusalem is no longer the center of the Church's mission). The Holy Spirit empowers them to be prophetic witnesses of Jesus. Paul tells the devout, God-fearing Jews that God's word of salvation has been sent to them and explains that the inhabitants of Jerusalem and their leaders failed to recognize Jesus as the Savior. They rejected him and put him to death, thus "fulfilling the oracles of the prophets that are read Sabbath after Sabbath." But God has overturned this evil, raised Jesus from the dead, and fulfilled the promise he made to their ancestors. Paul—who was party to this same Jewish leadership—now filled with the Holy Spirit, witnesses to the risen Christ.

This is my prayer today: Lord, in witnessing to your Son, Jesus, I have neither the courage of the little nun nor the ability to persuade others as Paul could. Make me aware of your Spirit coursing through my veins so that my thoughts, words, and deeds may witness to the love of Christ in my life. Amen.

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