

## MDP of God

In our 2<sup>nd</sup> reading today St Paul tells the Philippians and us—how important it is that we conform our hearts to the heart of Jesus

He warns us that there are some who have shown themselves to be enemies of the cross of Christ—and he encourages the people of Philippi to imitate him as he seeks to live the life God calls us to live

Paul in essence is saying that we need to conform our hearts to the heart of Jesus as he himself has

As our psalm today said, “Hear, O LORD, the sound of my call; have pity on me, and answer me. **Of you my heart speaks**; you my glance seeks.”

Throughout the NT it's very obvious that Paul's heart was with Jesus

He was a well-respected leader of the Jewish faith *and he abandoned everything to follow Jesus*

He traded a life of worldly respect as a Jewish leader---and he traded that for persecution—trial—and hardship

In his zeal to spread the gospel—he was shipwrecked three times—he was scourged at a pillar on five different occasions—receiving 39 lashes each time—three times he was beaten with rods—once he was stoned and left for dead

Paul goes on in 2<sup>nd</sup> Corinthians to say: “I spent a night and a day in the open sea, <sup>26</sup>I have been constantly on the move. I have been in danger from rivers, in danger from bandits, in danger from my fellow Jews, in danger from Gentiles; in danger in the city, in danger in the country, in danger at sea; and in danger from false believers. <sup>27</sup>I have labored and toiled and have often gone without sleep; I have known hunger and thirst and have often gone without food; I have been cold and naked.”

My friends, *it's obvious that Paul gave everything for Jesus*—he had such a burning love for the Lord and for the saving message of the gospel—**that he was willing to face anything for Jesus**

Another example of someone who allowed his heart to be formed by his love of the Lord was St Patrick—whose feast day is today

St Patrick truly lived out some of the great themes of Lent

Throughout this holy season God calls us to forgive one another and love one another

Just yesterday at Mass- in the gospel Jesus taught us “to love your enemies and pray for your persecutors” (Mathew 5:43ff)

And St Patrick—showing that his heart was truly conformed to Jesus *did just that*

St Patrick is of course famous as the man who transformed Ireland

But what's important to understand is that Patrick as a child was kidnapped and made a slave in Ireland

He remained a slave for many years until he escaped

A lot of people after that ordeal would have hated the Irish—a lot of people would have shook the dust of Ireland off his feet and never looked back—except maybe with hatred and contempt for all that he faced

*But Patrick chose to love the people of Ireland*—he chose many years later to return there as a missionary—**and bring the gift of salvation to the people who at one time had enslaved him**

I think it's safe to say that Patrick's heart was very attuned to the Heart of Jesus  
If Patrick had chosen to hate the people of Ireland

If Patrick had chosen to be filled with anger and resentment with for people of Ireland—*none of us would have ever heard of him*

But choosing to love the people of Ireland **changed everything**—choosing to go back to try to lead them to Christ—choosing to bring them the love of the Lord—*Patrick ended up changing the world*

He led a pagan people to Jesus—and that once pagan country sent missionaries throughout the world—at one point Ireland’s biggest export was priests

**He literally changed the world**—and all of it happened because like Jesus and like St Paul—*he chose to love his persecutors*—he chose to seek their eternal good instead of hating them—he chose to forgive and seek their salvation—He chose to conform his heart to the heart of Christ

So St Paul conformed his heart to the Heart of Jesus—St Patrick conformed his heart to the Heart of Jesus

*And my friends—lent is all about us seeking to conform our hearts to the Heart of Jesus*

Lent is about taking our relationship with Jesus from our heads and taking it to our hearts

Where Jesus isn’t just the One we believe in—where He’s not just the all-powerful God we pay lip service too—He’s not just the mysterious figure who embraced the cross for our salvation

*But Jesus becomes the center of our lives—the reason we get up in the morning—the One who gives meaning to everything we do—//where Jesus becomes the One we love and never want to disappoint*

We have an opportunity as a parish to better conform our hearts to the Heart of Jesus---We have our Heart of Jesus retreat coming up in a few weeks

On April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup> we can spend time with other parishioners to focus on our relationship with Jesus and His Family [Lent a great time...]

I really want to encourage all of you to prayerfully consider giving a day and a half to help your hearts be better conformed to the Lord’s Sacred Heart

Also for the men of the parish—the Diocese has it’s annual “Answer the Call Conference” next Saturday—we have in the bulletin how you can sign up for that

You know often when we think of where we're personally at with the Lord—and we can think, "I'm okay—I don't need to do anything special to grow closer to the Lord—I'm good with my faith"— *and to justify ourselves in that attitude we often compare ourselves to others*

We can compare ourselves with some of the people at work who gossip and back bite and aren't very honest and we think---"wow, compared to them I'm doing great"

Or we can compare ourselves with some of the people we went to school with—and we can think of some of the mean things they did---and we can think---"well, compared to them I'm a real saint"

Or we look at people on the news—some who are criminals or some of the people in politics who are supposed to be leading our country---and we can think---"compared to them—I'm ready to be canonized"

But I know myself—when I compare myself to St Paul—I'm powerfully reminded of how much I need to grow if my heart is to really reflect the Heart of Jesus

When I compare myself to St Patrick—I'm powerfully reminded that I have a long way to go if I'm going to become the man God wants me to be

I don't fall into despair *because I know God loves me just the way I am*—but I also know **He loves me too much to let me stay the way I am**---God is calling me—He's calling all of us to more and more have the Heart of Jesus

As a parish and as individuals we have a wonderful opportunity to better conform our hearts to the Heart of Jesus

In this day and age when so many have abandoned faith—when so many just pay lip service to faith--- this lent *I ask you to take concrete action to help conform your heart to the Heart of Jesus* —for men we have the answer the Call conference next Saturday —and—I'd like to invite men and women to our Heart of Jesus retreat on April 6<sup>th</sup> and 7<sup>th</sup>

My friends—whatever you do—please don't just go through the motions of lent—let this lent be a time where you take concrete action to Conform your hearts to the Sacred Heart of Jesus

God bless you