Faith, Hope, and Love Lesson 23 March 10 Acts 21:27–40, 22:1–29 Arrest, defense, imprisonment

Q1. (Faith) Frequently at Mass the responsorial Psalm is “If today you hear His voice, harden not your heart.” Over and over again we hear St Paul hearing the voice of the Lord, instructing Him on what he should do. In what ways does the Lord speak to you today? Have you personally ever received specific instructions directly from the voice of the Lord? Would you share that experience?

Acts 22:10-11, 17-18

10 I asked, ‘What shall I do, sir?’ The Lord answered me, ‘Get up and go into Damascus,
and there you will be told about everything appointed for you to do.’

11 Since I could see nothing because of the brightness of that light,
I was led by hand by my companions and entered Damascus.

17 “After I had returned to Jerusalem and while I was praying in the temple,
I fell into a trance

18 and saw the Lord saying to me, ‘Hurry, leave Jerusalem at once,
because they will not accept your testimony about me.’

Q2. (Hope) From the very beginning, God intended to draw all people, including the Gentile nations, to worship Him principally through the Incarnation, death, and Resurrection of Jesus. As a Gentile what hope and thankfulness do you experience that you, too, can worship the Lord, be acceptable to Him, and receive the Grace of His Salvation?

Acts 22:22

22 They listened to him until he said this, but then they raised their voices and shouted, “Take such a one as this away from the earth. It is not right that he should live.”

Genesis 18:18

All the nations of the earth are to find blessing in him

Psalm 22:28

All the ends of the earth will worship and turn to the LORD;
All the families of nations will bow low before you.

Q3. (Love) Jesus calls upon us to love our enemies and those who persecute us. There was no greater persecutor of the Church than Saul, St. Paul. At the time of his conversion, he was enroute to Damascus to arrest any Christians, followers of the Way, and bring them back to Jerusalem in chains. Despite all this, Ananias obediently went to St. Paul, spoke God’s Word to him. How should we show the love of Christ to those who oppose us or have done harm to us. Have you ever been called upon to minister in some way to someone you would call an enemy?

Acts 22:12-16

12 “A certain Ananias, a devout observer of the law,
and highly spoken of by all the Jews who lived there,

13 came to me and stood there and said, ‘Saul, my brother, regain your sight.’
And at that very moment I regained my sight and saw him.

14 Then he said, ‘The God of our ancestors designated you to know his will,
to see the Righteous One, and to hear the sound of his voice;

15 for you will be his witness before all to what you have seen and heard.

16 Now, why delay? Get up and have yourself baptized
and your sins washed away, calling upon his name.’

A1. The Lord speaks to me in many ways, principally through the Scriptures. I am convinced that those light bulbs that occasionally go off during the Liturgy of the Word are nothing less than the Lord speaking directly to me. It occurs at other times, also. In the book, Proof of Heaven, by Dr. Eban Alexander, an avowed atheist. He had a near death experience in which God spoke to him. The description he give mirrors St. Paul’s description

I fell to the ground and heard a voice saying to me, ‘Saul, Saul, why are you persecuting me?’
 I replied, ‘Who are you, sir?’ And he said to me, ‘I am Jesus the Nazorean whom you are persecuting.’ My companions saw the light but did not hear the voice of the one who spoke to me (Acts 22:7-9)

My own experience with hearing the voice of God speak to me has mirrored both St. Paul’s and Dr. Alexander’s experience. The voice of God spoke directly to my mind with no audible sound.

A2. Without the Grace of God, I and every other human being is doomed to damnation. But, through the Cross and Resurrection of Jesus, all who Believe in Him and persevere to the end will enjoy the salvation that is only possible by the Grace of God. I praise the Lord that he has deemed me worthy to give up His own precious life to redeem me in spite of my sins.

A3. I have encountered few that I would call an enemy; I can’t think of any. I did have a professional dispute with a man when I worked for the Missile Command. It caused a great deal of turmoil and angst and loss of sleep in my life. I decided to follow Jesus’ command and went out of my way to be nice. The professional dispute did not go away, but my attitude greatly improved and the issues in my life disappeared. I would call following Jesus a success. The professional dispute was resolved the way I wanted it.