

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

In the first reading from Exodus, we have a very tender exchange between God and Moses. God is displeased by the lack of gratitude on the part of the Jewish people just as the Lord has delivered them from Egyptian slavery and captivity. We know that Moses himself was often on the receiving end of the wrath borne of restlessness and impatience on the part of the Israelites. Yet, in his colloquy with the Lord, he pleads for his people and seeks a reprieve from an exacting justice and punishment. In a rather bold move, Moses reminds God of the promise He had made to Abraham, Isaac and Jacob: "I will make your descendants as numerous as the stars in the sky." In His relenting, the Lord reaffirms his perpetual love and fidelity for His Chosen People. Here we see the elements of a covenantal bond forged by God to the people of Israel; the action of sin by people who have severed their relationship with God because of their behavior; and forgiveness and reconciliation. These concentric circles of the dynamics of human nature and behavior have one ultimate and unitive force: God never ceasing to love us and His receptivity of our conversion of heart and reconciliation.

Paul, in his letter to Timothy, speaks of his all-too human qualities of arrogance and persecution of those who threatened his worldview of how things ought to be. He stood at the vanguard of the violent persecution of the early Christian communities. He was a leader held in high regard for his zealotry. Paul's story is compelling precisely because it dramatically portrays the power of a conversion of heart and reconciliation. Paul speaks with a unique credibility given his life story and the transformation of a zeal which once was used to harm and now was used for an amazing good. Joseph Durepos, in his book [A Still More Excellent Way: How St. Paul Points Us to Jesus](#), writes: "Paul immediately abandoned his former life and began praying, teaching, traveling, and sharing the story of Jesus as the awaited Messiah. The sworn enemy of the first Christian believers became the greatest evangelist of the early church. His life's work and writings were driven by the urgent desire that all people would come to know Christ. Was Paul's ministry a success? It's been two thousand years now and there are more than two billion Christians on the planet. Not bad for a guy without a car, laptop, or cell phone." Well said!!!

Today's Gospel reading from Luke animates the mission for which Jesus was sent by his Father into the world: to redeem sinners and reconcile all people to himself. Jesus shares three parables that illustrate the Father's relationship with his children: the lost sheep, a woman who loses a coin and seeks to find it, and the prodigal son. In each of these scenarios, there is a disposition of joy and reconciliation when what has been lost is found. "In just the same way, I tell you, there will be rejoicing among the angels of God over one sinner who repents." The Pharisees and the scribes rebuke Jesus for being seen in the company of sinners and tax collectors. They do not understand the redemptive and merciful qualities of God. They cannot grasp the reality that God's desire for forgiveness and reconciliation is always available, for all time, for all people. This truth offers a sense of hope for all of us as human beings. We are called to seek reconciliation and a conversion of heart. These desires bind us in an inexplicable way to a loving and compassionate God who unceasingly calls us to Himself.

Fr. Tom