

## Reflection for Thursday 28<sup>th</sup> May 2020

*'The Lord appeared to Paul and said, Courage! You have borne witness to me in Jerusalem, now you must do the same in Rome.'*

These words are from today's first reading at mass, Acts 23: 6-11.

When Paul appeared before the Jewish Council he said he was on trial for his belief in the resurrection of the dead, which the Pharisees believed but the Sadducees did not. But this is the central proclamation of the gospel, the main point and it was proclaimed by all the apostles in their teaching and preaching. It is of course, still at the heart of our witness today. It is the resurrection of Jesus that is the cause of our hope. As St Paul said, *'...if Christ has not been raised, then our preaching is in vain and your faith is in vain.'*

If we truly believe in this central point of our Catholic faith we should want to proclaim it others just like St Paul, who was willing to endure great sufferings and persecutions, beatings, imprisonment, shipwreck and hunger in order to witness to Christ. We may not be called to suffer in the same way that Paul was, but we're all called to be witnesses to all we meet, at home, in the workplace and among our friends.

As far as St Paul was concerned his mission was to preach the simple message of Christ crucified. The message of the cross challenges the so called wisdom of the world. It reveals the humility of God who so loved the world that he sent his only Son to be subject to death, death on a cross, the sacrifice that takes our sins away. The cross of Jesus shows the world the power and love of God and by proclaiming it and asking for the help of the Holy Spirit to help us to love it, we grow in faith. Greater love has no one than to lay down their life for their friend and this is exactly what Jesus did: he laid down his life for his friends and we are his friends.

The trouble is, we find proclaiming our faith difficult in today's secular environment but God will give us the power, through the Holy Spirit, to bear witness to our faith. For example when people ask us

how we are coping with the lockdown and the restrictions placed on us we could say that we have more time for prayer and reading the scriptures and watching live masses streamed from any number of churches throughout the world. If we are asked what we miss most during this time of lockdown we could genuinely say we miss being able to go to mass or pay a visit to the church. This would be an excellent way to evangelise and let others know how important is our faith in our lives.

May the risen and ascended Lord bless us and Our Lady protect us.

Deacon Kevin

(with a little help from Bible Alive Easter 2020)