

“Lord, make me know Your ways. Lord teach me Your paths.”

The psalmist offers a sincere prayer that the Lord will make known His ways. These words have always struck a chord with me because they were chosen by the late Bishop Francis Thomas as his motto. Bishop Thomas was the Rector of the seminary both for Deacon Kevin and myself.

He chose these words for his motto as he felt that they perfectly expressed the heart of all Christian prayer – “Lord, make me know Your ways.” They spring from a keen desire to engage wholeheartedly with God’s will for us.

They express a prayerful trust in God’s providence and care as we are faced with the challenges and duties of our daily lives.

In seeking sincerely what God’s will is for us it might result in a change of mind and heart.

The scripture readings of today’s Mass speak about people who have changed their minds: From the prophet Ezekiel we hear God say:

“When the sinner renounces sin to become law-abiding and honest, he deserves to live. He has chosen to renounce all his previous sins; he shall certainly live, he shall not die.”

I am reading a book at the moment by Alessandro Manzoni, called “The Betrothed”. It is set in Lombardy in the late 1620s. The Betrothed tells the story of two young lovers, Renzo and Lucia, who are prevented from marrying by a petty tyrant Don Rodrigo. His accomplice the sinister “unnamed” undergoes a complete conversion through Lucia’s fervent prayers and by his encounter with Cardinal Archbishop Charles Borromeo. The unnamed felt such a complete revulsion for his former way of life that he drew back when the Archbishop went to clasp his hand. But the Cardinal seized his hand and said: **“Do not prevent me from clasping that hand which is to right so many wrongs, which will perform such widespread good works, which will raise up so many of the afflicted, which will offer itself, unarmed, to so many enemies in peace and humility.”**

The unnamed was helped to understand how God’s mercy would enable a conversion of his mind and heart, a new beginning.

It reminded of a saying: **“All Saints have a past and all sinners have a future.”**

We see this mercy of God highlighted in the Gospel of today’s Mass when Jesus tells the story of the Father and his two Sons. Jesus asks his hearers **“Which of the two did the Father’s will?”** and then explains that tax collectors and sinners are making their way into the kingdom of God because they believed in the mercy of God and allowed their hearts to be converted. They changed their ways.

For most of us we do not have nor need to have a dramatic conversion like that of the unnamed or what is sometimes described as a “Pauline Conversion”, but we are faced with daily choices which may help or hinder our friendship with the Lord. At such times we might pray the prayer of the psalmist **“Lord make me know Your ways.”**

The ways of the Lord are spelt out in today’s second reading from Saint Paul to the Philippians: **“Then be united in your convictions and in your love, with a common purpose and a common mind. There must be no competition among you, no conceit; but everybody is to be self-effacing. Always consider the other person to be better than yourself, so that nobody thinks of his own interests first but everybody thinks of other people’s interests instead.”**