

Quo Vadis?

A massive wave of persecution erupted within the city of Rome. Emperor Nero had just blamed the Christians for the fire that had destroyed a large portion of the city, and soon enough those Christians were bound to sticks, covered in skins of wild beasts and lit on fire to satiate the anger of the people.

The story is told that St. Peter knew that Rome was no longer safe anymore and so he began to depart from the city in secret. But along the road he saw the risen Christ heading toward the city of Rome and Peter asks Jesus, “Domine, quo vadis?” Lord where are you going? And Jesus responds “I am going to Rome to be crucified again.”

At this point, Peter recognizes what he is doing by fleeing and he returns to be crucified upside down.

Quo vadis? Where are you going?

When our Lord says that he is going back to be crucified again, he is not saying that his suffering on the cross in Jerusalem is not enough. Rather he is entreating Peter: will you carry my light into the darkness?

Therefore, the question that Peter asks of Jesus is really the question that Jesus asks of us. Quo vadis? Where are you going? Will you flee or will you stay?

Sometimes we need to flee from our suffering whether it is a toxic work environment or an abusive relationship or we need to do what is best for our family. However, there is other suffering which we cannot avoid. Or maybe he is not necessarily calling us to suffering but inviting us to enter into a challenging situation to bring his presence into it.

I think our Lord is asking many people the same question today: quo vadis? Where are you going?

As St. Paul foretold, savage wolves have ravaged the flock of God especially in the United States with the sex abuse scandals. Bishop Barron reminds us that a recent Gallup poll which indicated that 37% of Catholics who attend mass on a nearly weekly/monthly basis are questioning whether they should remain in the Church.

This is significant because after the scandals in 2002, it was only 24% of that same group who were considering leaving the Church. These new scandals have shaken the foundations of faith for many people and maybe even for us.

So whether it is a challenging situation in our life or the scandals that have rocked our church, we may have this temptation within our hearts to flee. And as we are fleeing we see our Lord walking right into the difficult situations in our lives, walking right into the scandals of the Church and we may ask him where are you going? Why are you going there Lord? There is only suffering and scandal and death there.

Yet Jesus is not asking for us to be taken out of the world, he is calling us to be sanctified in his truth, calling us to be radiant with the truth, not an abstract idea but the one who is the Way, the Truth and the life so that we may be like Mother Teresa who was called by Jesus to “Come be my light. Bring me into the dark holes of the poor. Come carry me I cannot go alone.”

Today, we may be wondering to our Lord where are you going? But he will ask the same of us: where are you going? Will you come be my light where there is none? Will you unleash an ocean of grace where many are so parched? Where are you going?