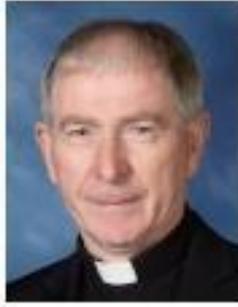


Father Martin's Pen

May 19, 2019



The Road to Damascus.

This is a reference to St. Paul's conversion from Judaism to Christianity in 36 AD while traveling on the road from Jerusalem to Damascus city to round up Christians.

By the way, in the story a legend without basis may have crept into the story. Wasn't Paul knocked off his horse? The problem is that if you read the three accounts of his conversion in Acts, there is no horse!!!

In a more generic way, we might say that the title above is a reference to any person who makes a dramatic change towards an active Christian way of life.

There is a third sense we can apply to the term, as pointing to the failure of the Crusades to take Damascus city in their efforts to keep the Holy Land out of Muslim control in 1147.

June 29th is the feast of Saints Peter and Paul. I have often thought that Paul must have had a prominent chin, as a sign of determination.

Like St. Patrick 400 hundred years later, it is ironic that someone who was not born into a certain class of people, became the ultimate representative of that body of people.

St. Patrick was not born Irish, yet he is now the preeminent Irishman. St. Paul was not born a Gentile, yet he is the Apostle of the Gentiles.

In spite of Paul's commitment to the Gentile Christians, I recall reading somewhere that Raymond Brown the Scripture scholar said that if Paul had a son, he would surely have had him circumcised.

Read Phil 3.6 where Paul himself attests to being a "devout Jew." This means that Paul never lost his Jewish heritage.

There is a point to be made here that we all need to own our history and out of a deep sense of our own history, we can accept and promote the best in other cultures.

The role of any Missionary is to remind the local people of the best attributes of their own culture and try to insert the gospel into that culture.

When I was in Korea, there was some conversation among Missionaries about "going native."

At least one person that I knew, had to be taken out of Korea, because he had lost his sense of who he was in an alien culture.

Not everyone can make the transition from one set of cultural values to another. St. Paul must have had his head squarely on his shoulders. We can quote him as saying that he was "a slave to all so as to win over as many as possible." 1 Cor. 9.22.

Some time ago I was in a Barnes and Nobel book store browsing through the religious book section. I picked up a book that suggested that the real founder of Christianity was not Jesus but Paul.

There certainly is a grain of truth in this, in so far as, St. Paul filled out in a more specific way the words of the gospel and the centrality of Jesus. Christianity would hardly be the same if we did not have the letters of Paul.

So then before June 29th you have some homework to do, read the letters of Paul.

Father Martin

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