

Jesus tells us: “I came from the Father and have come into the world; now I am leaving the world and going back to the Father” (Jn 16:28). Each person is created in the image and likeness of God, so what Jesus says about himself, in a certain sense, also applies for us. The Prophet Jeremiah explains it this way: “Before I formed you in the womb I knew you, [I loved you and chose you], before you were born I dedicated you” (1:5). Long before we are born, the Lord has known us and with the help of a mother and father to give us earthly life, God gives each one of us an immortal soul.

Jesus speaks of going back to the Father. Our earthly life is a journey back to the source. God offers us life in abundance in eternity where we may share in the divine nature of God. In fact, the priest offers a silent prayer at the start of the liturgy of the Eucharist to this very point as he pours a little water into the chalice filled with wine. “By the mystery of this water and wine may we come to share in the divinity of Christ who humbled himself to share in our humanity.” When we speak of Jesus, we speak of one person with two natures, one human, one divine. As we live on earth, we have a human nature. In the Kingdom to come, God who is infinite and can never be exhausted shares his divine nature with us.

Just as Jeremiah speaks of being “known” before he was in his mother’s womb, so to does the Apostle Paul. “God, who from my mother’s womb had set me apart and called me through his grace” (Galatians 1:15). We are familiar with Paul’s story. He tells the story quite well himself:

For you heard of my former way of life in Judaism, how I persecuted the church of God beyond measure and tried to destroy it, and progressed in Judaism beyond many of my contemporaries among my race, since I was even more a zealot for my ancestral traditions (1:13-14).

Paul clearly did not understand his true calling in life until the Lord intervened and refocused that destructive energy thus helping him to change from his former way of life to service as a Christian missionary.

Nothing in our lives is in vain. When Paul in turn is persecuted by Jews, he does not let that deter him being steadfast in his mission. When we have matched our energy and will to the will of God, then we can accomplish the miraculous with God’s help. “Amen, amen, I say to you, whatever you ask the Father in my name he will give you. Until now you have not asked anything in my name; ask and you will receive, so that your joy may be complete” (John 16:23b-24).

Life is a journey in search of God. Saint Augustine writes in his Confessions, “You have made us for yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” Before he came to know and love God, Augustine spent his adult life running from God. He searched in all the wrong places.

Behind Augustine are a succession of desperate searches for fulfillment: excessive pleasures, false religions, philosophy, dissipation and distractions—futilities that left him so weary of himself he could only cry out, “How long, O Lord, how long?” At the very moment when he uttered that cry, circumstances led his eyes to a passage in Romans that showed him he could be freed from sin. Shortly afterward, he was baptized. (christianhistoryinstitute.org/incontext/article/augustine/)

That passage in Romans was transformational. It showed Augustine the key to calm a restless heart:

The night is advanced, the day is at hand. Let us then throw off the works of darkness [and] put on the armor of light; let us conduct ourselves properly as in the day, not in

orgies and drunkenness, not in promiscuity and licentiousness, not in rivalry and jealousy. But put on the Lord Jesus Christ, and make no provision for the desires of the flesh (13:12-14).

Like Paul, Augustine's conversion helped him to understand that before he was formed in the womb, the Lord knew him, and loved him and chose him to be a prophet to the nations (Jeremiah 1:5).

Our hearts too will be restless until our will and desires are united with God's. He loves us unconditionally, and in a certain sense, the Sacred Heart of Jesus is restless until we rest in the Lord. Jesus keeps reaching out to us as he did with Paul and Augustine:

My sheep hear my voice; I know them, and they follow me. I give them eternal life, and they shall never perish. No one can take them out of my hand. My Father, who has given them to me, is greater than all, and no one can take them out of the Father's hand (John 10:27-29).