Ascension Year 2 (Mk 16:15-20)

 **BELIEVE THE GOOD NEWS**

According to Mark (16:15-20), the risen Lord, just before he leaves his apostles, tells them to go out to the whole world and proclaim the Good News to all creation.

He sends them back to the very beginning (Mk 1:14-20), when they first met him preaching the gospel and inviting the people to believe in the Good News.

That gospel, that joyful news, is that the time has come for the Kingdom of God to be established. The Kingdom of God is set up and expressed in the life, death and resurrection of Jesus. Therefore, Jesus himself is the good news. Jesus incarnates the Kingdom of God and invites all to believe in him.

Jesus says to everyone, “Be converted!” The Kingdom of God requires a conversion. The Greek word for “to be converted” means “to change one’s mind”. The word in the Aramaic language of Jesus means much more. It means, “to turn right round”, that is, to change one’s whole attitude to everything and to God in view of his coming kingdom.

Conversion is like turning yourself upside down. It is an intimate and total change of the whole person, of all our feeling and judging, in front of God. God becomes our centre of interest. We place God’s will above all our self-interests.

Jesus adds, “believe in the gospel”. Conversion includes the demand of faith.

Conversion is expressed by means of a total clinging to the gospel, that is, to Jesus Christ in his life, death and resurrection. Conversion will lead us to a meeting with God, who not only pardons us but who fills us with God’s presence.

The call of the disciples illustrates what it means to repent and believe the gospel. They left their nets and their father, and followed Jesus. That is, they left their livelihood and their family. Not everyone is called to such a radical conversion, but those of us who have been called to religious life have been called to that extent.

Their conversion did not mean only that these men repented of their sins, or that they found the forgiveness of Jesus, or that they accepted the truth of his words. It meant all this and more. They attached themselves to the person of Jesus and followed him on the way that led to their own cross and resurrection. All Christians are called to conversion to that extent, without having to give up one’s livelihood and family.

An experience of conversion involves suffering. It is a kind of dying to a part of ourselves that we want to hold on to, because we are accustomed to it, or because we value it, or because we find our security in it, or because we identify ourselves with it. Without it, we think we will come apart.

Most of us are blind to our need of conversion. We do not recognize which are the attitudes that we should convert from and which are those that we should convert to. It will help us to recognize them if we take note of the attitudes of others towards us that upset us.

 Instead of dismissing them at once indignantly, we should think about them, carry them into prayer, not with resentment but, under the guidance of the Holy Spirit, find what truth there is in them.

Then the painful but liberating process of conversion can begin. So, let us continue to be converted and believe even more strongly in the gospel, the good news, of the life, cross and resurrection of Jesus, our Saviour.