

The Mission: Dedication to Christ



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In Butler's *Lives of the Saints*, we find the following written about St Winefride:

When the holy priest preached to the people, Wenefride was placed at his feet, and her tender soul eagerly imbibed his heavenly doctrine, and was wonderfully affected with the great truths which he delivered, or rather which God addressed to her by his mouth. The love of the sovereign and infinite good growing daily in her heart, her affections were quite weaned from all the things of this world: and it was her earnest desire to consecrate her virginity by vow to God, and, instead of an earthly bridegroom, to choose Jesus Christ for her spouse. Her parents readily gave their consent, shedding tears of joy, and thanking God for her holy resolution.

People become Christians in many different ways, but this account of St Winefride's decision to consecrate herself to a religious life, echoes what people still testify to today about evangelism and discipleship, - how people are called by God to be Christians and determine to follow Jesus Christ. It is important that we have people to help us understand the Gospel, the good news about Jesus, and that we enter into a journey of learning and growing in Christian faith. The worshipping community is important. And it is important that we come to learn that it is God that calls us and converts us.

For many people today, the idea that we could turn away from earthly things like money and possessions to concentrate on God is difficult to comprehend. It seems that so much of modern life puts the emphasis on possessions and partners, so the idea of doing without them can seem scandalous, impossible.

But this is precisely what Jesus asks people to do in the Gospels. He tells the rich young man that he needs to get rid of his many possessions if he really wants to love God and follow him. He tells his followers not to get hung up on family affairs and to leave their busyness and their worldly attachments in order to hear and understand more clearly what he has to tell them about God's purposes for them and about the nature of the kingdom of God.

Today's monks and nuns continue to live the same consecrated life as St Winefride and many people seek out their wisdom and presence with things like retreats or study days among those communities; even people who have little or no faith will visit for rest and refreshment. Such people value the rhythm of life, the constancy of prayer and the dedicated faith of those living in those religious communities, even if they don't understand it or the choices that are made by those who choose a single life totally dedicated to Jesus Christ.

Digging into the Mission – some things to do

- Find out about monks and nuns living in religious orders today. What different kinds of religious orders are there? Where and how do they live? What do they offer to people?
- Find out about things like living by a rule of life and the cycles of prayer. Could you live by a simple rule of life which shaped your day? Why not have a look for one?
- 'Decluttering' is quite a fashionable idea these days. If you were going to 'declutter' your life, what would you get rid of and why? What could you not bear to part with? Why not?
- What examples of famous preachers can you think of? Who are the most important teachers and helpers in your life? How have they shaped your ideas, thoughts and decisions? Have you ever thought about finding a spiritual director, spiritual companion or soul friend?
- Look at the picture below? Who is listening? What do you think the two people might be talking about?



Rolf Dietrich Brecher/flickr Listening