

SEPTEMBER 25 2025 FATHER FRANCIS SALASIAR

A few years ago, I read the story about a man who received a mysterious letter in the mail. The envelope had no return address, no explanation—just a simple note inside that read: “*Someone is watching you.*” The man was unsettled, to say the least. He began to look over his shoulder whenever he walked down the street, double-checked the locks on his doors, and started wondering if he had done something wrong. He lived in a state of suspicion and fear, not knowing the source of the message or the meaning behind it. Eventually, it turned out to be a prank from a friend who thought it would be funny. But for the man who received it, the mystery created turmoil in his mind and heart.

That story reminds me of King Herod in today’s Gospel. He, too, is disturbed by a mystery. Rumours about Jesus are spreading like wildfire. Some say He is John the Baptist risen from the dead, others say Elijah, others say one of the ancient prophets. Herod is perplexed, afraid, and intrigued all at once. He wonders: “*Who is this man? Who is Jesus?*”

Herod’s question, “*Who is this man?*”—is not just his question; it is the question that confronts every single one of us. Who is Jesus? This question is at the heart of our faith, the very foundation of our lives as Christians. And unlike Herod, we cannot be content with curiosity or hearsay. Our salvation depends on our answer.

Herod had the chance to meet Jesus. He had heard about Him and was eager to see Him. However, his interest was not rooted in faith—it was curiosity, perhaps even superstition. He felt uneasy because deep down he knew he had done wrong: he had beheaded John the Baptist. Now, in the works of Jesus, he perceives the echoes of his own conscience.

Herod's tragedy is that his curiosity never led to true conversion. He wanted to see Jesus, but only as a spectacle. Later, when Jesus was brought before him during His Passion, Herod was pleased—not to hear the truth, but to see a miracle, like a magician entertaining a king. This also serves as a warning for us. How often do we approach Jesus not to be transformed by Him, but to ease our guilt? To tick off a religious box so we can feel we've done our duty and then go back to the habits, relationships, and attachments we know are wrong but find too comfortable or pleasurable to give up? We can be curious about faith, even fascinated by it, all the while keeping it at arm's length from the parts of our lives we're unwilling to surrender.

Herod's fear also teaches us something about the human conscience. He had silenced the voice of John the Baptist by putting him to death. But the truth cannot be silenced so easily. His guilty conscience haunted him. He could not escape the voice of God echoing within him.

Each of us has experienced that inner voice—the restlessness of conscience when we know we have done wrong. We can try to bury it, to distract ourselves, to drown it out with noise, but it will not go away. It is a gift from God. St. Augustine said, “Our hearts are restless until they rest in You.” Herod's restless heart shows what happens when we resist God's call to repentance.

This short Gospel passage, though only three verses, is very powerful. It challenges us in several ways:

First, to **face the question of Jesus honestly**. Who is Jesus for me? A teacher? A prophet? A miracle-worker? Or the Son of God, my Saviour and Lord?

Secondly, to move beyond curiosity to commitment. Faith is not about watching from the sidelines. It is about surrendering, following, and allowing Christ to transform us.

Thirdly, **to listen to our conscience.** When we feel unsettled because of weakness and brokenness, it is not meant to drive us into fear but into repentance and reconciliation. The Sacrament of Reconciliation is the place where that restlessness finds peace.

And finally, **to avoid Herod's mistake.** Herod had many opportunities to turn back to see Jesus, but kept resisting. We too may be tempted to postpone conversion: "I'll change later... I'll forgive tomorrow... I'll pray more when I'm less busy." But each delay hardens the heart. Today is the day of salvation.

So dear friends, let us ask ourselves, are we, like Herod, merely perplexed and curious? Are we fascinated by the idea of Jesus but unwilling to let that idea become a person who demands a choice? Are we trying to see him on our own terms—to get a miracle, to feel a comfort, to ease a guilt—without accepting the full weight of his call to repentance and discipleship? Herod is the perfect icon of a soul stuck in spiritual curiosity. He could be the patron saint of those who are fascinated by Jesus but refuse to follow Him.

The good news is that our Lord does not remain silent for those who truly seek Him. He did not answer Herod's empty curiosity by performing a miracle, which eventually could have freed him, but He answered the desperate cry of the thief on the cross: "Today you will be with me in Paradise." He answers the seeker who knocks, the soul that thirsts.

So let us pray today for the grace to move from curiosity to seeking, from fear to faith, from wanting to *see about* Jesus to longing

to *know* Jesus. For it is in knowing Him that we find the only answer that finally satisfies the haunted question of the human heart.