

In the Bible Belt South, a great emphasis is placed upon one making a profession of faith. Often quoted is St. Paul's line from Romans "for, if you confess with your mouth that Jesus is Lord and believe in your heart that God raised him from the dead, you will be saved" (Romans 10:9). This seems to indicate that salvation is merely a matter of believing in your heart and professing with your mouth.

Today's Gospel reading from St. Matthew seems to stand in stark contrast to such a minimalistic understanding. In Matthew 7:21, Jesus says to his disciples, "Not everyone who says to me 'Lord, Lord,' will enter the Kingdom of heaven, but only the one who does the will of my Father in heaven."

In fact Jesus indicates that one who does not act on his word is a fool, like a man who built his house on sand. Professing with your mouth, believing in your heart, and acting on Jesus' words are not a series of options from which the Christian chooses in order to customize their own version of discipleship.

All three qualities are necessary; otherwise, we are just playing games – pretending to be Christian – like a child playing make believe.

St. Ambrose, whose feast we celebrate today, was a man of action. Not only did he have a deep faith and was a renowned orator, but he was also a man of action, standing up against the Arian emperor of Milan.

I am beginning to learn that being a disciple of Jesus Christ is not something that allows me to pick and choose what I will do and what I won't. It's an "all in" commitment. I am convinced that authentic discipleship reflects a deep and intimate relationship with Jesus Christ that is evident in what we say and in what we do.