

HOMILY – 19TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME – 13 AUGUST 2017

‘Man of Little Faith’

If I asked you to measure our faith in God, between one and ten, ten being the strongest, where would yours be?

In the Gospel today, Jesus declares to Simon Peter, “Man of Little Faith”, after he started to walk on water and then began sinking. You may argue that if Jesus says that about St Peter, what chance have I got? The thing is, it is the same Simon Peter, who recognised Jesus, before all the other Apostles. When asked ‘Who do you say I am’? It was Simon Peter who boldly declared, ‘You are the Christ, the Son of the Living God’. Is Jesus setting the bar high? Perhaps the lesson is, professing faith is not the same as living it. We may declare ourselves to be a Catholic Christian but am I living out my Catholic Faith 24/7? Does it mean everything to me?

Many times, I am delighted to see young couples presenting their child for Baptism. The rite of Baptism asks them to renew their profession of faith, their Baptismal promises. These are key questions. Do you reject evil? Do you believe in God the Father, Son and Holy Spirit? Do you believe in the One Holy Catholic Church, the forgiveness of sins, the Resurrection of the dead and life everlasting? I shouldn’t, but sometimes, question their sincerity. I say, “I believe, but do I really believe? Is it coming from the core of my being? From the heart? Or, are they merely words repeated? Do I understand what I profess to believe in?

Perhaps, many of us have an implicit faith, well intentioned, maybe at times unintended, a bit confused even starved of prayer. Or, at times, our faith is like the ‘Helter-Skelter’, at the showground. We are on a spiritual high when on holiday at the Sistine Chapel in Rome and when a baby is born but we go through grave doubts when dad dies of cancer or my sister doesn’t get the job she prayed for.

Simon Peter walks on water, as long as he has complete faith in Jesus as God but when he doubts, when he believes he can do this on his own, then he sinks beneath the waves.

True faith, is as Basil Hume used to say, a daily surrender or offering of one’s life to God. ‘Faith’ does not mean we will never be harmed or suffer injustice, that is called ‘Blackmail’ or religion by bribery. True faith means setting our sights firmly on Christ and the Kingdom of God. Accepting that life throws us man challenges, even tragedies, but through it all, that we will be vindicated, found worthy at the end of time.

As St Paul wrote in Romans, no trial, no torment, no suffering, will ever separate me from the love of God. Faith does not stop us feeling the storms of life, faith helps us not to sink beneath the waves of doubt and despair.

When the Titanic was sinking, in the Atlantic, many of the passengers and crew, still on board, sang ‘Abide with Me’. It was a declaration of faith, that the believed in the afterlife and ultimately, they were in God’s hands, whatever happened.

It is so important that we know and believe that our souls live on into eternity. The teaching of Christ, the revelation of Holy Scripture and example of the lives of the Saints are all there to ratify that theology of eternal life.

And so, to renounce our faith or lapse can result in three things. One, lack of spiritual fulfilment in this life. Two, playing into moral decay and rejection of the living Church and three, harming our entry into the Kingdom of Heaven.

So, keep your faith strong, nurture it believe in it, build it up and protect it from all harm. 'Faith is not easy, God knows that, so he waits patiently for us to find it'. In the words of Cardinal Basil Hume – "Without that firm belief in the Incarnation (God made flesh in Jesus), there can never be true peace, true joy, true hope and goodwill among people. Perhaps one of the great difficulties of our modern age and for many Christians too, is that we only half believe, half doubt. (It is on 5 out of 10). We do not go the whole way and say 'I believe' with total conviction. 'O Lord, that I may believe in you always'".

God Bless you all.