

Homily 4th July 2021 - 14th Sunday of the Year

Where your faith the size of a mustard seed – once accepted and nurtured it can turn into something great!

The truth is that humanity has wrestled with true faith in God since the dawn of mankind. We are used to the natural phenomenon of parents passing onto their children their looks, their blood line and even their intellect; but there is no guarantee they will pass on their faith in God as well.

The fathers of criminals could be saints just as the sons/daughters of tyrants could become saints. – the father of St Mungo/St Kentigern was a rapist; the nephew of St Bernadette of Lourdes was accused of profiteering – the key point is that the supernatural grace given in faith has to be personally sought and found - Remember St Paul was an enemy of the Church before his faith conversion.

In the first reading from Ezekiel, as the prophet laments the apostasy of the Israelites – he describes their behaviour as defiant and obstinate. – later to be described like dry bones in the desert. (Chapter 37) the same metaphor could be used to describe the many lapsed Catholics and non-believers in Scotland today. Those who have reneged on the faith and many others who have never come to faith in the first place. Though, I am of the opinion that some of those who claim to have lapsed in their faith in God, did not have an enlightened understanding and relationship with God in the first place – where perhaps looking for an excuse to lapse.

There is a church in Rome called the church of St Clemente, which goes back on that site to the 3rd/4th Century. Its namesake/patron saint was of a rich Roman family who worshipped the pagan gods of Rome. Clement, however, discovered and embraced Christianity. Believing and worshipping God in the Trinity. He was deeply affected no doubt by the Christian martyrs.

His own family were so ashamed and disturbed by his personal conversion to Christ, that they disowned him and expelled him to live on the streets of Rome. It was only when he was begging at the gates of their villa; that they repented and he was reconciled with them.

Jesus teaches us in the Gospel today that no prophet is ever welcome in his own home and as St Paul teaches us; that to be a Christian, a real Catholic Christian, you must be prepared to experience hardship, persecution, rejection, hostility and even death – even from your relations...

You see, to be an ambassador of Christ means to stand for all that is contrary to the corruption, evil and wrongdoing in our world. The presence of a true disciple of Christ, a person made in the image of God, threatens and disturbs the ungodly; it disrupts their thinking; their pagan philosophy of life, which is often wrapped up in prejudice and selfish ambition.

The Roman Emperor Marcus Aurelius even commented, when the persecution of the Christians was going on in Rome; there is something different about these Christians; that has never been seen before – that they have the face of angels.

We, today, in the Church, must be strong believers in Christ, that are prepared to stand up for our Catholic faith and be a contradiction to the secular individualistic political culture that erodes the dignity and sanctity of human existence. When you do have a real faith in God, as you know, it brings all human life fulfilment. As St Thomas Aquinas would say it gives form and shape to our existence and lasting fulfilment to our mortality. That on this St Thomas Day, we are able to declare “My Lord and My God” and Jesus to remind us, “Happy are those who have not seen (what Thomas saw) and still believe in me”!

God Bless you all, AMEN.

Fr Jeremy C Bath