

## 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time Year C

Jean Vainer, founder of L'Arche (a community that looks after handicapped people) once was in an orphanage for children and he was amazed that none of the children in their beds were crying. He wondered if that meant that all their needs were met and they were content. The caretaker corrected him saying that it was not a good sign, it was a very bad sign. It meant that the children had cried but no one responded and so they stopped crying. They had given up.

In the First Reading, we hear the people had given up praying. They were like the children of the orphanage, they didn't think anyone would save them so they had stop crying to God. The prophet Habakkuk was sent to give them hope, to tell them to have faith. It doesn't seem too encouraging. Have faith he tells them. Cardinal Dolan visited an old lady in her eighties and he asked her to pray for vocations. She said, "Father, I don't have time." Father Dolan, at the time, questioned how she could be so busy that she couldn't pray a little for vocations. She said, "No, Father, it is not that I don't have time but that I don't have enough time left. You see when I was a little girl I started praying for the conversion of Russia and only after seventy years did communism fall in Russia. I don't have another seventy years to wait for God to answer my prayer for vocations."

What is faith? Faith is the belief in something unseen. Faith is a truth that God is God and He rules over the world and is only allowing the things that He can make good come from. Faith is a radical trust. In the Gospel we hear, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree be uprooted and grow in the sea and it would." Wow, what an analogy of faith. Tell a plant, who is sedentary by nature and does not live in salty water by nature, leave your natural environment and live in the sea and it would live in an unnatural environment. That is amazing. But isn't that what faith does? It makes us live in an unnatural environment of trust in God. Wow. How does one get this faith? Well, faith is an infused gift that we received in our Baptism so that means we can only pray for this gift. And this gift gives us the ability to radically ask God for things. Yet most times we are scared to ask for small things. I remember in Seminary each Sunday I would pray the whole rosary for vocations, three mysteries at that time and at the end four. I was all alone from our diocese at the seminary. So I thought I should ask for one or two seminarians. Then I had the idea: *Why should I ask for something pathetic like two, is not God good? Can't He do great things?* I asked for twelve seminarians for our diocese. In my time at seminary we had twelve different men come from our diocese. Four of us were ordained, three for our diocese. Faith is a gift from God and it is meant to give us a boldness.

However, I have discovered a further aspect of faith that to me seems as important since it is making an act. That is thanksgiving. So when you pray, be thankful knowing that God will answer your prayer, especially when it seems unlikely. That is the greatest time to be thankful because faith is a belief in something you can't see. That Satan fellow is very crafty and he can see things from afar, though he is not able to see the future. He often tempts us to give up and stop praying because it was not answered the way or in the time we thought right, just when the prayer is to be answered. I admit it will be a battle at times but thanksgiving when it seem impossible annoys the devil and wins the victory. Once you pray, the more despair you feel, the more you should give thanks boldly. As St Paul says, God did not give us a spirit of cowardness but of power. So we need not fear. Today rekindle your spirit that you received from the laying on of hands.

How do you do that? It is true that it is hard to hear God when we are in the state of serious sin so that should be removed. But do you think God gave us some of His spirit for us to use it for nothing? When

have you used the gifts that God has entrusted to you? You are full of power and transforming grace through the Sacraments. In Confirmation, for example, we were given seven gifts: Fear of the Lord, Piety, Counsel, Wisdom, Courage, Knowledge, and Understanding. To those who have been confirmed, those gifts are there with us. When was the last time we used them? These gifts are meant to set our heart ablaze with a power to bring souls to Christ. We have to be intentional in using them if we want them to make a difference. I listed them off in that order because what I do is focus on one each day of the week so that I won't be judged for wasting the gifts God gave me. I know as Catholics we might feel crushed by the sin of our membership, by the Church scandals. I know we may feel side-lined but that is a trick of the enemy so that the truth will be silenced and chaos and confusion will reign and it reigns today with all this gender ideology and sexual confusion.

If you don't think the Church has the answers to today's crisis, pray for faith because the Church is a truth telling institution. She will always tell what does not seem right and will be proven right time and time again. Look at our crisis and scandal in the Church: we are here because we did not listen to God, we did not follow the Church's teaching. We were not obedient, we didn't have faith to trust that God was right. So we took matters in our own hands and forged our own morality and, voila, mess in the world, mess in the Church.

Fear not these messes in the world and the Church. Just so you know, the Church has always been in a mess, I have read her history. I am not saying this to whitewash the sins of her members. We have always been in a mess because we people in the Church lack faith. That is why we need to pray for it and use the grace we have been given. Because God is God and faith allows Him to accomplish His Divine Plan. Faith makes the mulberry tree and the people live and thrive in an unnatural environment and that is the radical trust of God.

There was a lady who had a deep faith and beside her lived an atheist. She was quite poor and went through difficult times but she always praised God. One day the atheist overheard her praying, "Lord, I really need some groceries." The atheist figured, "I will show her there is no God," and he went out and bought her groceries, laid them at her door, then hid in the bushes. She came out and saw the groceries and praised and thanked God for His goodness. The atheist stepped out of the bushes and said, "There is no God! I bought them for you, foolish woman." She smiled even more brightly and said, "Oh thank you, God, you are even better than I expected. You got me the groceries and you made the devil pay for them." With faith we will know that even the devil ends up working for God.

We need not fear. Pray with confidence, boldness and thanksgiving. God is God and He is our Father.