

'Faith' (Luke 17: 5-10)

Fr Chester Lord – St Peter's Bighton Beach – 6/10/2019

May I speak in the name of God: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Amen.

I vividly remember an activity we were all encouraged to participate in during rugby training one afternoon at school. It was centred around teamwork and trust in your fellow players. The aim was to cement the belief that they always had your back. The exercise involved standing on a bench on the side of the field and falling back into the intertwined arms of your teammates behind and below you. Although I never doubted their ability or intention to safely catch me I can still recall the associated feeling of anxiety, a pinch of doubt and even a niggle of despair, at having to test their resolve. Trust does not come easily. Nor is it easily won or earned.

However, everybody has some type of faith. People have faith in many different things. When we get into our cars or embark upon a journey in an aeroplane it requires faith to trust that it will get us safely to our desired destination. We have faith that our doctor knows what he or she is doing. Everyone has a mindset of faith of some kind or another. No one can live a single day without exercising faith.

Faith is also expressed in the spiritual realm. Each of us regardless of our backgrounds or culture demonstrates faith.

When we attend church, we hear a lot of talk about faith too. We read about it in the Bible and we sing hymns about it.

Unfortunately, sadly, many people today have become jaded or cynical about what they place their faith in. What they might regard to be their anchor in life. A sure and certain security that can be trusted in and cherished. In a world of competing philosophical ideologies, political promises, material seductions, scientific

assurances and rugged individualism it can be difficult to find a secure place to invest our faith. A true North in our lives that we can truly depend upon.

Yet others battle to trust or exercise faith because of personal tragedies or losses experienced in life. Tragedy is hard to understand, hard to explain and hard on faith. Some people even lay the blame at feet of God and become bitter and negative toward Him. They may ask for explanations and only be met with apparent silence. They ask for comprehension and are confounded.

Life, indeed, can present itself as a mystery. Much of what unfolds and occurs in life is beyond us or our control. And even if it were explained to us, we probably wouldn't be satisfied with it. We long for sensibility.

This is perhaps the yearning that the apostles were experiencing in our Gospel reading this morning. They may have been feeling overwhelmed, a little confused, tired and even facing niggling doubts. That is the human condition.

After the horrors of the Holocaust, a survivor named Corrie ten Boom was asked to recount how she maintained her courageous faith amidst such unimaginable pain and hardship. Upon emerging from a Nazi concentration camp she said, "There is no pit so deep that God isn't deeper still." She picked an apt analogy because pain and suffering is a pit. For some, it even appears bottomless. Many experience a falling, a disorientation, a terror, as they desperately grab for walls that are seemingly out of reach. They see and perceive only blackness, and hear only echoes of the life that they used to know. And sadly for many, they claim that God is far from them or not even present.

But our readings this morning remind us, assure us, that God is still there. He is present and he is worthy of our trust.

Yes, pain is real. But God, indeed, is real too. That's where faith comes in.

Faith reminds us we may not fully grasp God's design for our lives now. We have to depend upon and lean on God's promises. Promises fulfilled over time for so many of our heroes of the faith in the Old and New Testaments. Since faith is a gift of God's boundless mercy and grace, then it like other gifts, cannot be earned. All we have to do is ask, and after you ask to believe that it's yours.

So how much faith is enough? Do we need to have vast amounts of it, or will just a little do?

The disciples asked Jesus, "Give us more faith." I am sure these apostles were disappointed or confused at times not seeing things come to bear as they had thought.

And of course Jesus answers them, "If you have faith as small as a mustard seed, you can say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it will obey you." A mustard seed is so small that you can barely see it. Jesus said that our faith could be compared to this little seed. What's interesting is that a mustard seed is the smallest of all seeds. Yet even one so minuscule is worth more and is of greater value when it continues to grow. You water and feed the seed of your faith by giving it nourishment. We get that spiritual nourishment by reading God's word, praying, sharing at God's Holy table and by worshipping together in fellowship.

When we have faith in God, it isn't a question of how big our faith is, rather it is a question of how powerful our God is, and with God all things are possible!

I would like to conclude with a quote from Vincent Nichols where he ponders the great mystery of faith:

“Faith in God is the gift that takes us beyond our limited self, with all its incessant demands. It opens us to a life that stretches us, enlightens us, and often springs surprises upon us. Such faith, like love, sees with the heart that which is invisible and lives by it.”

- Thanks be to God.