

**OUR LADY, STAR OF THE SEA, WEYMOUTH
HOMILY FOR THE 27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME
6th OCTOBER 2013**

May I worthily proclaim your Gospel?

Today's readings are all about faith. But faith isn't simply a thing, it's a love affair with God, it's a relationship. And it has a depth that can give us immense/unshakeable inner security. Any relationship is 2 way, and this one involves such a depth of love. Consider this. Christianity is the only religion I know where we don't have to work to get to heaven, because God's love towards us is so huge that it's offered as a free gift. It's our faith that opens heaven to us. "For we are justified by faith". Now that is surely good news. BUT remember we are in a relationship, and the true response of faith and love, our task, is to return that love.

As with all relationships there are difficult times. "How long am I to cry for help while you will not listen" Habakkuk cries out. And God replies "This vision is for its own time. If it comes slowly, wait; for it will come without fail. See how he flags whose soul is not at right, but the upright man will live by his faithfulness."

I'm sure many of us can relate to Habakkuk as we cry in our hearts "how long".

And this raises the question for all of us, what do we understand by faith. St Paul tells us that we must walk by faith, not by sight. So, when trials come, which they will, somehow we need to focus on what God tells us – to do this we need to know what he says – and fix our belief on what God's word says, not what we see. Somehow, we need to accept his word and bring our thoughts into line with this, to trust that events will somehow, at sometime, come into alignment with what God says, recall the vision given to Habakkuk: "for it will come, without fail". We must resist the temptation to settle for what we see at first sight and doubt God's word.

That is what the people of Israel did, as we heard in the psalm. Despite all the wonders they had seen, they tested God and hardened their hearts. And this is a very common response. When we get tested, when we don't see the results of our prayers in the way we want, we decide to harden ourselves as a means of self protection. Don't do it. Although I may not be popular saying this – that is the easy way out. BUT, the easy way out has consequences. If we close or harden our hearts, maybe because we doubt or think that staying open to love and to loving seems too risky, the result is we move away from God away from his love and in the long run our relationship with God suffers and we struggle with life on our own. Our sufferings and trials seem even bigger and harder. God hasn't done this to us; we are doing this to ourselves. Remember we're in a relationship, we have to trust (keep faith) even when it's hard.

Sometimes God may give us some direct comfort and strength, but in fact we are the body of Christ, aren't we. So, we are his hands, his voice, his help. "Praise be to God..... Who comforts us in all our troubles, so that we can comfort those in any trouble with the comfort we ourselves receive from God..... (2 Cor1.3-5)". It's up to us to bring Jesus to each other...

May I worthily PROCLAIM your Gospel.

Faith comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes by the preaching of Christ. (Rom 10.17)

Hello....faith comes from listening to preaching!!!! (Which includes the readings).

We state this at every Mass with the Creed. We have a God who created everything, yet he calls us his children. His love is so vast for each and every one of us that he sent his own son to die for each and every one of us. And he gives us his Holy Spirit to guide and comfort and challenge us. He loves you (arms wide) so much....children, do you know the bed time story about going to sleep whilst mum says I love you to the moon and back. We may never fathom the size of this love until we are in heaven (with surprises). But this is good news. Heaven is open to us, whatever we may have done – or not done – we just need to respond to this love, in faith. This ranges from providing for those who need help e.g. family fast day; to hugging someone crying. We may even one day be able to join St Paul in saying, “I do not want to live anymore for myself but for him who died for me”. (2 Cor 5.15); or “It is no longer I who live, but Christ lives in me” (Gal 2.20)

Right, hopefully now everyone is awake. So, what to do? St Paul tells Timothy, and us. Fan into a flame the gift God gave you....you are never to be ashamed of witnessing to the Lord. (We need to practice this). This is especially hard for teenagers and students as it's not cool. There seems to be so much pressure to be ashamed about our faith. YET is trying to be kind and caring, praying with good intentions for others a shameful thing? Should we be ashamed of hoping to be with Jesus when we die? Isn't gossiping about others, putting people down more shameful than trying to be caring and joyful?

And in the Gospel the Apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. Good example for us. Ask for faith; then, fan it into a flame. As with most things, faith grows when exercised (SVP; catechists; servers...); it shrinks if we let it stagnate. Faith grows through regular nourishment. So how do we nourish it? By praying and having contact with a believing community. How many of us have prayed for more faith this week? (Let's pray right now for each other for an increase in faith)

Thank you. You see, we can approach God and religion as something to be understood and explained, i.e. rationalised; or we can approach it as something mysterious that cannot be understood nor explained; only experienced. And that little prayer we have just done is a tiny, tiny experience of receiving love from someone else. And when we start to deeply experience something of God's love – directly or through others, this will increase our faith, we can ask for more faith and, as I was saying at the start, this in turn will cause us to act, to return the love God gives us.

God bless us and increase our faith today.

Rev Jonathan de Kretser