

Deacon George's Homily for 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

If we say, "It can't be done", then it won't be done. But, if we say, "it must be done" then, it most likely will be done. If God asks us to do something then, it must be done. And if we are doing it for God then we are not doing it alone. Because, we are doing it with God and with all his power. And what is this power? It is the Holy Spirit that lives within us, a gift that God gave us, at our baptism and re-affirmed, at our confirmation. It is the Spirit of power and love. And with it comes, the gift of boldness.

Paul's boldness of Spirit is rooted, in faith in God and is not silenced, by suffering. Paul's life and ministry was one of fearlessness, in the face of opposition. And now, as a prisoner himself, he asks Timothy, to also bear the hardships, which fidelity to the Gospel will bring in its wake.

Timothy, was Paul's companion for 17 years. And Paul knew, that his close friend was, by nature, timid and reserved. So he is telling Timothy, that the gift of ministry is not a spirit of timidity but the spirit of power and love. And now, he is encouraging Timothy to be, not only a guardian of the faith he has received. but also a minister of boldness. Paul's instruction to Timothy is, "Be a bold guardian of the faith",

In today's Gospel, the journey to Jerusalem is nearing its end and the teaching of Jesus now turns to the qualities needed by the Apostles, for their future ministries. And, the first, and foremost, quality is faith.

In Mark's Gospel, Jesus charges the Apostles, with having no faith. In Matthew's Gospel, several times, he describes them, as, "having no faith". Whilst, in Luke's Gospel, the Apostles take the initiative and ask Jesus to increase their faith. Just like the Apostles did earlier, when they asked him, to teach them to pray and now they ask Jesus to increase their faith,

Jesus responds to their request, with the parable of the mustard seed. He tells them, that the power of faith, as small as a mustard seed, is strong enough to uproot the mulberry tree and plant it in the sea. To plant a tree in the ocean, would be a very bold action indeed but Jesus never bothered with such eccentric demonstrations. He put his power of faith and love to work on behalf of the afflicted and the suffering, who came to him for help and healing. However, Jesus' main point still stands, a faith that is rooted in God is capable of a boldness that is awesome.

It was Jesus' boldness enriched through his personal relationship with his Father that caused the authorities to accuse him of blasphemy, and eventually to plot his death. But in the end, his deep rooted faith in his Father, enabled him to see through the suffering and be courageous enough to face the cross. And just like Jesus, we also need to have a personal relationship with the Father, through the Son and Holy Spirit.

But do we really believe in a God who encourages us to be fearless?. Because we should believe this if we are to believe, what St Paul said that God has given us a spirit not of timidity but one of boldness.

It was through their personal relationship with God and their faith in Him that Paul, and Jesus each discovered their courage. And if we too, have a personal relationship with Jesus, I am sure he would be telling us to be bold.

Christianity did not spread rapidly because only Paul and Timothy were bold, it spread at a pace because the laity were also bold. It was an emboldened laity who with a firmly rooted faith in Jesus, and the help of the Holy Spirit, that spread the Gospel message in words and deeds. And their boldness was a gift, the gift of the Spirit of power and love.

What the Church needs now, and I include this Church, is the power of the Spirit and especially, the gift of boldness. And we should pray for this now, in order to combat any apathy. We should not be afraid to proclaim the Gospel message in words and deeds. Because this power of the Spirit is given to us, so that we have the courage to share our faith with others rather than retaining it solely within ourselves. The first believers did not hold back and neither should we.

The reality is that the Church is getting smaller, and smaller, and it is only a bold laity that can halt this decline. The solution is in our hands or should I say in our hearts. Today, Jesus is telling us, that the power of faith, as small as a mustard seed is strong enough to uproot the mulberry tree and plant it in the sea. Who knows, what wonders for God, our faith and love will achieve, if we too are bold. So, therefore for that, must be done, let us pray for boldness, for a boldness that is awesome.