

DEACON GEORGE'S HOMILY FOR 27th SUNDAY OF 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**.

Our first reading tells us, that the cry of the prophet Habbakuk, is not a scream of **despair**, but a cry that is deep rooted in **faith**. His **faith** in God, gives him the **courage** to shout and argue with God. Because Habbakuk confidently believes that God will do **something**, and his **faith** is proved right. God does **do** something. However, God does not give any rational answers to Habbakuk’s Why? or How long? Instead, God **teaches** him, how to **live** without answers, and to **live**, rejoicing in God. Because the **something**, that God **does** do, is that he **increases** Habbakuk’s faith.

Just like the prophet Habbakuk, 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. Therefore 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**, they now 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 Habbakuk, 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**. And as our relationship with God, through his Son, grows **stronger**, we could perhaps, just like Habbakuk, shout and argue with him, but don’t forget, it could be a risky stance, not least because, God always has the **last** word. And his word might require, in response, a **bold** action on our part.

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, 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 what **must** be done, let us pray for **boldness**, for a boldness that is **awesome**.