

4 Lent A 2020 SML
JN 9:1-41

In the Bible, and in the subsequent teaching tradition that came after the Bible, there are more than twenty distinct variations on the meaning of the word “faith.” We need not consider so many. Faith, in one variation, is rocklike conviction.

Faith is loyalty. Because I have faith in you, I’ll be loyal to you. Peter said, “Even if I must die with you, I will never deny you.”

On the far side of the Cross, St. Paul is able to declare:

I am convinced that neither death, nor life, nor angels, nor principalities, nor present things, nor future things, nor powers, nor height, nor depth, nor any other creature . . . I am convinced that death will not separate us from the love of God in Christ Jesus.

That is faith with all stops pulled:

- ✓ faith militant,
- ✓ faith defiant,
- ✓ faith courageous.

Faith is also assent; it is saying yes to a proposed truth or course of action. Here, preeminently, is the faith of Our Blessed Mother in her fiat, “Let it be according to Thy word.” We will celebrate Mary’s feast of the Annunciation, Mary’s assent to faith, this Wednesday.

But it’s easy to talk about faith when your sampling is Peter, Paul and Mary 😊 That’s funny. But there’s no one here to laugh. And outside of being biblical figures, Boy Wonder has no idea who Peter, Paul and Mary are!!

Faith is trust, without which we are left, quite literally, with nothing. Thursday’s homily was about all about St. Joseph, patron saint of trust.

We trust our senses, we trust that there is reality external to ourselves – although both can be doubted and have been doubted by thinkers more than we can number. “I can’t believe what I just heard . . . I can’t believe what I just saw . . . this pandemic is unbelievable!” President Trump’s address to the nation this afternoon, “Unbelievable. 148 countries are affected. Unbelievable!”

We entrust ourselves to the truth of things that can be doubted. When say some things are beyond a

“reasonable” doubt, the adjective “reasonable” simply indicates where we draw the line of trust. Such things are not proven beyond “possible” doubt, doubt that the relentless skeptic thinks is reasonable. Regarding the pandemic, “Oh, it just can’t be that bad . . . goes against reason.”

We entrust ourselves to others, without which life would be intolerable. That’s why we are trusting our government leaders, President Trump, Governor Murphy.

We speak of taking a leap of faith, and we all know that experience in ways both great and small. Sometimes we mull over a decision, we don’t know whether to go this way or that, and finally we know that we simply have to decide one way or the other, so we decide and hope we made the right decision. There is an element of faith there, but it is more like a gamble, a throwing of the dice. It is not so much entrusting ourselves to another as hoping in “luck” or “fate.”

Moving from a gamble to faith is trusting that another person will do what he promised to do. When we were children at the end of the pool, our Dads, with arms

extended in the pool yelled, “Jump. Don’t be afraid. I’ll catch you.” But we were afraid and needed to be assured several times that Dad would really catch us, that he would not pull away at the last moment and let us sink to the bottom of the pool. We were assured, we jumped, we were caught and faith was vindicated. We entrusted ourselves, we commended ourselves and we were saved.

Now, over and above the human, there is the Divine. And since I know God to be the One who neither deceives nor can be deceived, I accept His revelation by faith.

How do men receive a Divine revelation? Immediately, I am often awestruck how my daily devotionals, my daily readings before the Blessed Sacrament are spot on. I’ve quoted them several times this past week in my homilies.

Some deny it, ridicule it, some are silent and undecided. The same reactions happened at the time of Jesus. Today’s gospel of the cure of the man born blind is case in point. The miracle was performed to prove that Jesus is the Son of God. The miracle was the motive to believe in Him.

But there were some who refused to recognize the miracle, denying it was the same man who was born blind. “He just looks like him.” In other words, he was a **fraud**. But the man born blind, who now can see, said, “I am he.”

Having eliminated fraud, those who inquired how the change came to pass moved on to **deceit**, attacking the character of the Jesus. There is a latent awareness that Jesus performs miracles, but they refused to draw the proper inference that He is the Messiah. They inferred he was a sinner. How can a sinner perform a miracle?

Neither the blind man nor his parents could convince them. “It is unheard of that anyone ever opened the eyes of a blind man. If He were not from God, He would not be able to do anything.”

And then they attacked the character of the blind man. He must be:

- ✓ rotten,
- ✓ a liar,
- ✓ a thief,
- ✓ dishonest,
- ✓ an imposter,

✓ something,

because they threw him out of the synagogue.

Circling back to faith, when Christ saw the man, He asked him, “Do you believe, do you have faith in the Son of God who is speaking with you now?” And He answered, “Yes, Lord, I do believe. And he worshipped Him.”

The question all of us are asked during this pandemic is the same question Our Blessed Lord asked the man born blind, do you believe, do you have faith in the Son of God who is speaking with you now?” I do. Without a shadow of a doubt. Because I know, I don't just believe, I know that God cannot fail us. It's impossible for God to fail us. So we need to trust the government authorities. We need to trust the advice of the medical community, and do everything we need to do, trusting that God is putting on their minds what they are asking us to do.

Faith, it will be seen, has nothing to do with expectancy or fate. It is not related to the abstract. It centers in on a Person – a Person who is Truth Himself. It becomes a dialogue, a prayer between the human and the Divine, between:

- ✓ a dark mind and light
- ✓ a weak will and a surrender
- ✓ a blinded eye and sight
- ✓ ourselves, and the One, the only One, Jesus, toward Whom we have very good reason to believe.

Without Jesus, we are blind. But when His Truth is accepted, we no longer blindly stumble in the darkness. No, we walk, better yet, we run into the Indescribable Light of the Perfect Day to Him!