

Homily - Year 30 B - October 25, 2021

In reading this week's gospel, a sentence came to mind: persistent perversity provokes the patient pedagogue producing particularly painful punishment, especially the word "persistent." The blind man in the gospel was not perverse or doing anything wrong. But he was persistent. He yelled out to Jesus for a cure. He yelled again even when the others told him to be quiet. Ultimately, Jesus calls him over and asks him what he wants. The man's simple request "Master, I want to see" is matched by Jesus' even simpler answer "Go your way. Your faith has saved you."

Then, two things happened: the man began to see, and the man began to follow Jesus.

This story of the blind man is rooted in faith, but what is faith? Well, faith is certainly persistence. We frequently say that someone's faith guided his life or that faith got me through a difficult situation or that faith has inspired me throughout my life. Then, we have the gnawing question why do some people have faith, want faith, live on faith, but others could care less?

Here in church, in a few minutes, we will stand and profess our faith, but certainly the articles of faith that we recite are not the same faith that allows me to face the daily struggles at home.

Simply put, faith is our response to a mystery, a response to something or someone bigger than us. Faith recognizes that there is someone beyond us, bigger and better than anyone we could imagine.

All of this sounds so very mysterious, something beyond what we could ever imagine. There are so many mysteries in life. The mystery of the universe. The mystery of others, and even the mystery of ourselves.

To help us understand these mysteries we have religion. Our religion tries to explain God to us, especially God as revealed in scripture, not the God we make up in our own minds. Unfortunately, so many do not see the awesome beauty of God but only see a list of doctrines.

Morality teaches us how to face the mystery of the universe, the mystery of ourselves, and the mystery of others. Morality shows us how to interact with creation, the world, others, and ourselves so that there is good harmony in the universe. Unfortunately so many see morality as a mere list of do's and don't's rather than a loving response to a caring God.

Prayer constitutes our way of answering God's call to us. Unfortunately, so many see prayer as a frantic attempt to reach the person

in charge when you have to go through a long series of recorded messages to reach the one in charge.

Our doctrines, our morality, and beliefs are all faith. Likewise our attitude towards our doctrines, our morality, and our beliefs is likewise faith. We have been given our faith, and faith is our response to that gift.

The family is the first place where faith is shared. A child's first attitudes towards faith are shaped in the home. The church, right here, is where that faith is nurtured on a weekly basis. In church and church-sponsored programs, we learn about morality, about the content of our faith as spelled out in the creed. In church, we celebrate what we believe, we receive God himself in the Eucharist. None of this can be found elsewhere. People, buildings, resources, spaces, programs are all part of the church. Without the church we end up making up our own beliefs and practices.

So many have given up the practice of the faith; so many have ceased practicing or perhaps practice only on occasion. We must pray for them, but we must also work at bringing them back to the regular practice of the faith. If we do not, then our church and, yes, the faith will dwindle down to nothingness. We see the signs of that lack of practice. Just look at the empty places in church. Those empty seats witness to what I have been saying.

Do something for your faith life, be persistent in your faith, so that you too can hear those words of Jesus spoken in today's gospel: "Go your way; your faith has saved you."