

24th Sunday in Ordinary Time (B)

The roles of faith and works were very important to St. Paul. As a Pharisee, he was of the mind that one could EARN the love of God and thus be saved by saying the right prayers and doing the right things, perhaps even making the right donation....

But after his conversion, and being immersed in the love of Jesus Christ freely, he says that all of the other stuff is all BUNK—the only thing you need is FAITH in Jesus Christ. And Martin Luther picks that up during the Middle Ages again and produces his doctrine of “Justification by Faith ALONE”, and the whole Reformation happened. But that’s a homily for another day.

I think St. James may have seen the hole in that logic, even as St. Paul was writing it. And what he writes seems to make a lot more sense. Listen again to what St. James says, “In deed, some one might SAY, “ You have Faith, and I have Works”(As if the two could be separated, so he goes on,) Demonstrate your faith to me.... Without WORKS.... And I will demonstrate my faith to YOU..... from my works.

Think about it, I could TELL you I’m a great golfer.... But unless I got off a really luck shot, I wouldn’t get off of the first tee at Evergreen, and you would know that wasn’t true.

And nobody who IS a great golfer has to tell anyone. It become known by his incredible drives and amazing putts.

So, how do you know someone has great faith? Not by their words, but by their works. Not by them telling someone to go in peace, keep warm, and eat

well"... but by giving them the necessities of body which they NEED to do so. Clothe the naked. Feed the poor in Christian Charity; Fraternal love.

And let's take this then to the Gospel. Jesus asks an interesting question, "Who do people say that I am?" And they come up with a pretty impressive list. And the people are saying this, because of what Jesus is doing. He is teaching with authority, healing the sick and driving out demons. Only a great prophet could DO such things.

And then he asks..... "Who do YOU say that I am?" And Peter says "You are the Christ." In Matthew's version of this story, he tells us that Jesus says to Peter, "Blessed are you, Simon son of Jonah, for this was not revealed to you by man, but by my Father in heaven." You see, Jesus at this point in the Gospel, hasn't DONE anything Messianic, only Prophetic, so He then teaches the disciples what ACTIONS, what WORKS, being the Christ will involve....suffering..... rejection..... and finally to be KILLED. But it doesn't end there, but goes on to RISE after three days.

Then he tells the crowd, which would include US, that, "Whoever wishes to come after me, must deny himself, take up his cross, and follow me."

This is the action, this is the work that must come FROM our faith. We must take up and share that cross; Endure that suffering; But then we also have to rise ABOVE.

Let US... SHOW.... That we are CHRISTIANS... by our Love.