

FROM FR. CHRIS ALIMAJI'S DESK

Reflections on Understanding Faith in God

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year B, June 20, 2021! The Scripture readings are Job 38:1, 8-11; 2 Corinthians 5:14-1; Mark 4:35-41; and our Song of Praise is Psalm 107.

How do you define Faith? Some define faith as a leap in the dark. May be, we can demonstrate faith from a story of a house on fire. It was said that a house was on fire, and everyone left the house, but a child was left behind. It must be a story building. While there was smoke everywhere, this child started calling out to the father from up there, with a window wide open. The child could see nothing but the smoke, calling out to the father. The father could see his child and said: "Jump, I see you clearly." With that, the child jumped out from the window and fell into the father's arms unharmed. **We do not see God, but God sees us and knows everything about us. We believe in God and so we have faith in God, his existence, his omnipotence and omnipresence and omniscience.**

In this life, we have so many questions. There are questions about our situations, our experiences, our sufferings, you name it. "Why" questions arise when things happen to us: why me? Why? Why? Why? It is said that "Why" questions have religious explanations. The "why" questions most often challenge our faith. **The inexplicable things that happen to us humans happen for God's own kind purposes. Because we cannot fully understand them, we would have to accept them in faith. The things we cannot understand or explain we call them mysteries. There are so many mysteries all around us in life. Suffering is also one of them, sickness is another one.** I have diabetes, but I did not partake of sugary things, a teaspoon of sugar was more than enough for my cup of tea; neither drink bear nor smoked, neither do I eat any of such things they say cause diabetes. Therefore, I wonder, why me! My brother has stroke. He says: we cannot question God. What things make you question God?

Job was such a righteous and holy man who placed all his faith in God. God was proud of Job. May God be proud of me too! He must have raised many questions when awful fate befell him. Why? Why? Why? The sicknesses he suffered, loss of his cattle, sheep, possession, death of his children and wives, calamities of every kind, etc., etc. Those were the storms of his life, the bedrock of our First Reading, from where the Lord addressed Job with the questions only God can ask. "Who shut within doors the sea, when it burst forth from the womb; when I made the clouds its garment and thick darkness its swaddling bands?" (Job 38:8-9f). **Out of the storms of his life, God addressed Job. That must have taken place in his meditations, his lamentations, as he reflected on his experiences, the storms of his life.** Who else in the Bible encountered God through suffering? I believe you do have storms in your life too. How often do you dialogue with God to seek understanding?

In our prayer against Coronavirus, we prayed the Lord to come and calm the virus as he calmed the storms of our lives. Today's gospel tells us of the storm-tossed boat to which the terrified apostles cling to for fear of death. Have you ever been involved in such fear of death?

What was it that you survived from? The Lord Jesus suggests that your faith should have reassured you. So, how is your faith as a Christian believer? Do you have faith? Re-examine your faith today. What works do you carry out as a result? St. James says: "Show me your faith without works ..." (Jas. 2:18).

As I listen to the Gospel, I think of our ride in a boat on that same Seas of Galilee exactly two years ago this month. That pilgrimage brought the Bible – the Gospel , alive for the nine of us from SPN on that trip. Some of you have already been on Holy Land pilgrimage. "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" The Lord Jesus stood up and commanded the troubled sea, "Quiet! Be still!" and it obeyed him. **Two points of note here, (1) Do you recognize the divine power of Christ in that event? (2) Do you obey the command of Jesus, he whom even the sea and wind obey? Like children, we too really need to develop a sense of wonder. Sometimes we think that God does not care, or not see us.** In what do you still disobey the Lord? If today you hear or read again these events, harden not our heart, (cf. Ps. 95:8). In our struggles with sinful habits, what worked for me in the past are meditative prayers and making of resolutions. I made plan on how I would avoid or disobey the promptings of evil intentions. We do know when temptation begins, all of us, but we agree to take chances. Therefore, St. James says, let nobody say temptations come from God, for God does not tempt us. (cf. Jas. 1:13). The devil, like the wind, is stronger than any of us. Hand your temptations or sinful habits over to the Lord Jesus, our Savior. May the Lord Jesus be with me in my boat, all my life! Amen.