



Allocutio



Presentata Curia 23rd April 2009

Allocutio: Faith

Our Lord can only be delighted to see you all here. Why? Because he said “Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe.” How can we explain this gathering unless we consider faith? Just think! A group of ordinary people who enclose themselves for this evening and many other evenings with each other in what some would see as madness. Not to mention the work you take on for Our Lord and Our Lady. How do you explain the joy, happiness and psychological balance of such a group if faith is not real and strong among them. Yes, blessed are they who do not see, yet believe.

You are blessed because you do believe. Because faith reassures you about the bottom line of life, about this world passing. You would not have it any other way! You seek a city in heaven where the Lord God reigns and his order prevails in all things. Because you know the Lord is true you are reassured about all things.

Yes, dear friends, you and I, ordinary plodders on life’s way, we too are blessed because of our faith. And the Lord must be delighted to see you here too. He knows your faith. He knows that you could have done other things tonight. Your faith, not madness, has brought you here. And actually I strongly suspect that for some of you or indeed perhaps for all of you, your faith is a life-line and a source of nourishment in your lives without which your life would contain an emptiness you would keenly feel. And even what you give to the Legion of Mary gives your life a real focus.

Our Lord said to us in yesterday’s Gospel, “For God so loved the world that he sent his only Son so that all who believe in him would not be lost but have eternal life.” Listen to that! Belief has to do with not being lost. Because being lost is a human reality for many. So many struggle through each day, each phase of life and are unsure about what their lives are about or where they are going. They have no direction and no goals apart from survival and trying to make the best of this world. Those of us who have faith and have always had it can fail to notice the difference it makes, how we have a goal which is heaven, how we have a way which has been shown us by Our Lord. We are indeed blessed!

Yes, blessed are we who do believe. And blessed are we in the Lord’s eyes for we did not see the Risen Lord as Thomas saw with the nail-marks in his body or the wound in his Sacred Heart and yet we believe. Remember that Our Lord himself holds you in high regard as he did the Centurion and the woman with the flow of blood. Our Lord is deeply impressed with those who have real faith. So with the father of the lad who had the demon of epileptic fits let us pray, “Lord, I do believe; help my unbelief!”

But we are even more blessed that we think. Because faith is not a human creation. It is a supernatural gift. There are those who say that faith is a product of human needs and certain psychological conditions. But how strange in our world that so many people who have almost the same formation and the same experiences can be so different in the matter of faith. One scientist faced with the same data will say something like, “How interesting. It is amazing that nature could have produced this organism. But I do not see the hand of God anywhere.” Another scientist, just as eminent, will say, “Praise you Lord for your wondrous works!”

But should we marvel at all at the wonder of faith? Our Lord made it clear that it was a work of God himself, “Simon, I say to you that it was not flesh and blood that revealed this to you but my Father in heaven!” Is it any wonder that Our Lord rejoices in those who have faith because he sees that it is a grace at work in us given by his heavenly Father. And do you notice something else in the Gospels, that often



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the faith precedes the confirmation in the miracle. The Centurion believed first, the woman with the flow of blood believed first, Martha believed in Christ before he made her brother Lazarus rise. And if we believe in the Resurrection surely it is the prelude to our own Resurrection!

There is one other thing however that must be said. Faith brings with it a deep energy and joy. This may not be immediately visible or obvious. But let me put it like this. My Jewish sister in law was bowled over by the sisters she met in Hampton many years ago. I think it is fair to say that a new dimension of life was revealed to her by the happiness and joy she found in those sisters, albethem cooped up in this convent with each other for so many years. And I believe there is a joy in our hearts because of the vision on life that our faith gives us. If you were to believe only in this world and not in anything else you would end up depressed. If your faith was in your fellow man then you would live with a great cautiousness because of the unreliability of humans.

But because of our belief in the Resurrection we know of God's power and his ability to transform death into life, wrong judgement into glory and human weakness into the power and strength of God's Holy Spirit. We believe that our sins must not hold us back, need not discourage us because we are forgiven by a Lord who just wants us to pick ourselves up and get on with his mission. Yes, we can rise again and restart our spiritual struggle. We do not have to lie down under our failures but we can get up renewed and keep bravely at life. We know that every effort we make can be touched with God's grace and that he in his own time will bring it to perfection.

And we know that we can continually go forward because Christ is walking with us, knowing our fallen state but also knowing what we can become by the power of his grace just as the weak apostles also triumphed over their own human weakness and shortcomings.

And all of that is cause of our joy. Because with God's forgiveness and with God's graces working in us we can bring something to life that others will never be able to do. And we may not see it in ourselves but sometimes others do. Certainly I have heard of many wonderful cases of people being lifted up by the positive joy and outlook of those who have real faith.

Lord, we thank you for our faith. Preserve and deepen it in us. And protect us against letting it slip or weaken in us.

Amen.

Fr Paul Churchill