

Ordinary 19C 2013

Why We Believe

Every Sunday we profess our faith in God the Father, his Son Jesus Christ, and the Holy Spirit. Every Sunday we profess our faith in the church, the resurrection of the dead, and life everlasting. But in addition to professing our faith, every Sunday we are making a public act of faith by assembling as a parish community to celebrate this Eucharist.

By our presence at Mass we are professing to each other and to the world that Christ is in our midst. By our presence at this Eucharist, we are proclaiming to each other and to the world that the Word of God is the source of our life. By our presence at this Eucharist, we are proclaiming that we are waiting in faith for the fulfillment of God's promise in our lives, and in the life of the world. We are professing that we are waiting for nothing less than the restoration of God's creation.

The faith that sustains us is the faith described in today's second reading, from the Letter to the Hebrews. Faith, that letter tells us, is the *realization of what is hoped for; it is the evidence of things not seen.*

Faith is the realization of what we hope for; that is to say, our faith already assures us of what God will do for us. Our faith is a foretaste of what will be. If I may put it in economic terms, faith is the down payment for merchandise that will

be delivered at a future date. It is the assurance—God’s own assurance to us—that God will bring about what we believe.

For example, I firmly believe that Jesus Christ is risen and alive, but I cannot see him in the way I can see you today. I firmly believe that the dead will rise to new life in Jesus Christ and that world will be transformed into God’s new creation, but I do not yet experienced the resurrection of the dead; nor do I see this new creation.

This is where faith comes in. For by faith I already experience something of the presence of the risen Lord in our midst in the Eucharist we receive each week. By faith I experience the gift of the Spirit, which is the foretaste of the resurrection life we will enjoy in Christ. By faith, I know that God, not Death, will not have the last word—the only word that counts.

Faith is the evidence of things not seen. Although I see and experience the world about me, faith teaches me there is more to the world than I can see. This, of course, is not surprising. After all, science is always pointing to things in the universe that exist but we cannot see. And so it is with faith. Faith says there is more to life than we can see, feel, hear, and touch. Faith teaches us that the risen Christ is in our midst. Faith teaches us that Spirit of God is present to us. Faith shows us that the world is charged with the beauty and life of God. Faith is the evidence of what we cannot see.

So why do we assemble every week? Why do we come to Mass? Why do we receive the Eucharist every Sunday? We assemble every week because our faith is the evidence and assurance that the Spirit of Christ and the power of God are present to us. Our faith points to what we cannot see, and it assures us that it is present.

Some say we are wasting our time here. Others say our time would be better spent somewhere else. But we know better. For, by faith we see what others cannot see. By faith we understand what others do not. For our faith is the foretaste of what will be. Our faith is the evidence of what we cannot see. This is why we believe, this is why I believe.