

Ordinary 20C 2013

*The Faith of Jesus*

In last week's homily, I spoke about faith. Taking my cue from the Letter to the Hebrews, I noted that faith is the realization of what we hope for; faith is the evidence for what we cannot see. Faith is a foretaste of what will be; it is our assurance of what we hope for. In today's homily, I would like to continue this reflection on faith. But instead of focusing on our faith, I will speak about the faith of Jesus.

The faith of Jesus, you say! What do you mean? If Jesus was the Son of God, why did he need to believe? If Jesus was the Son of God, did he need faith?

We are not accustomed to talking about the faith Jesus. We believe in Jesus as the Son of God, and so we assume that Jesus had no need to believe. But although he was truly God, Jesus was also truly human; and like every human being he too had to believe. Listen again to what the Letter to the Hebrews says about our faith and the faith of Jesus:

Since we are surrounded by so great a cloud of witnesses, let us rid ourselves of every burden of sin that clings to us, while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus *the leader and perfecter of faith*. For the sake of the joy that lay before him, he endured the cross, despising the shame, and has taken his seat at the right hand of the throne of God.

Jesus is the *leader* of our faith, because he has already done what we must do. He was unjustly condemned, but he trusted that God would save him. He surrendered his life to sinners, but he trusted that God would save him. He did not know that final outcome of his suffering, but he trusted that God would save him.

Jesus is the *perfecter* of our faith because he brings our faith to its completion. Dying on the cross, he experienced the absence of God, "My God, My God, why have you forsaken me,"

but he continued to believe in God. Abandoned by his disciples, he continued to trust and believe that God would save him. Scorned and rejected by many, he continued to trust and believe that God would save him.

By enduring the cross for the sake of the glory that lay before him, Jesus teaches us the way of faith. Although he did not fully know what that glory was, he trusted and believed that God would not forsake him. He trusted and believed that God would glorify him. He trusted and believed in God.

It is because Jesus trusted and believed in God that we ought to do the same. It is because Jesus is the perfect example of faith that we ought to believe. It is because Jesus has shown us the way of faith that we ought to follow him.

We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses, the letter to the Hebrews says: people who have already attained the goal of faith and now wait for us to enter into the glory they enjoy. We are like a long distance runner who has entered the last lap of the race. We are tired and discouraged, not sure that we can reach the finish line, but the crowd urges us on because the end is in sight. We are surrounded by the saints in heaven who have already run the race and now enjoy the glory that belongs to Christ. We are surrounded by a great cloud of witnesses who encourage us to believe to the very end. For, if we believe as Jesus believed, if we trust as Jesus trusted, we will gain the glory that Jesus attained.