



Christ in Our Neighborhood

Prayer

Loving Father, You have given us the virtue of faith to follow Your Son. May we place our faith in Him alone and find, at the end of our journey on earth, a place with You in heaven. Grant this through Christ our Lord. Amen.

Commentary

1st Reading: Ezekiel 17:22-24

The Book of the Prophet Ezekiel acknowledges that all things, even our virtue of faith, begins with God who has faith in us. Whether or not we deserve God, our Lord is forever and always faithful to us.

The Lord promises that His faith in His people will result in a mighty kingdom similar to a majestic cedar on a lofty mountain. All will know that the Creator and sustainer of such a tree is the Lord God.

Our faith in God begins with God's faith in us. This is an incredible mystery. Why would God love us with such great fidelity when we have wandered far from Him? Yet, He does!

For this reason, we respond in faith and love to the One who loves us first.

Question

How have you recognized God's faith in you?

Commentary

2nd Reading: 2 Cor 5:6-10

Saint Paul reminds us that we belong to a world that lies beyond the senses. Only faith can discern such a world, "for we walk by faith and not by sight."

11th Sunday in Ordinary Time

It is easy to get caught up in the world of the five senses. Unless I can see, touch, or hear the Lord, I will not believe. But, there is no need to "believe" in what we can already see. Rather, our faith is in what is not seen. Even Jesus reminded St. Thomas, "Blessed are those who believe and have not seen."

Faith requires an element of courage. Stepping into the dark and following a Lord we cannot touch appears to be foolish. It also appears foolish to think that there is life beyond the grave. Our world expects us to be smarter than that!

"Yet," as St. Paul says, "we are courageous, and we would rather leave the body and go home to the Lord." It takes a courageous person to step out in faith and see what God has in store for us beyond our mere senses.

Question

How strong is your faith in the Lord?

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Commentary

Gospel: Mark 4:26-34

Have you ever noticed that Jesus never fully describes the details of heaven in terms of a place? Rather, He speaks of the Kingdom of Heaven in terms of a relationship. According to Mark, Jesus shares that this relationship grows slowly — like a seed sprouts and matures over time. However, this relationship can be compared to a mighty tree, the likes of which never have been seen.

Pope St. John Paul II reminds us that heaven is more of a state of being than a place. When we think of heaven as a place, we may never develop a relationship with our Lord. Understanding heaven as a state of being — of being in love with God — then we begin to understand the parable offered by Jesus in Mark's Gospel. Notice that the Kingdom of God is not a future oriented place, but a communal relationship between God and His faithful ones here and now.

Question

How are you a part of God's kingdom right now?

This Week's Task

Take some time this week to work on your "heavenly" relationship with God.

— Get yourself a cup of coffee and sit outside or in a place that brings you peace and just reminisce with the Lord about a pleasant experience or memory you had recently or in the past.

— Spend time with God in silence before the Blessed Sacrament at church.

— Pour over Sacred Scripture and allow the Word of God to fill you with joy!

Prayer

Pray this traditional Catholic prayer called An Act of Faith:

O my God,

I firmly believe that You are one God in three Divine Persons, Father, Son, and Holy Spirit;

I believe that Your Divine Son became man, and died for our sins, and that He will come to judge the living and the dead.

I believe these and all the truths the Holy Catholic Church teaches because You have revealed them, who can neither deceive nor be deceived.

The prayer continues with Psalm 92

Psalm

Response: Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

It is good to give thanks to the LORD,
to sing praise to your name, Most High,
To proclaim your kindness at dawn
and your faithfulness throughout the night.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

The just one shall flourish like the palm tree,
like a cedar of Lebanon shall he grow.
They that are planted in the house of the LORD
shall flourish in the courts of our God.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

They shall bear fruit even in old age;
vigorous and sturdy shall they be,
Declaring how just is the LORD,
my rock, in whom there is no wrong.

R. Lord, it is good to give thanks to you.

Conclude with an Our Father