

The Faith of our Fathers

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“Now faith is the assurance of things hoped for,
the conviction of things not seen;
And without faith it is impossible to please him”
(Heb 11:1,6 RSV)

Sometimes I doubt if I do have as much Faith as half the portion of my grandparents now gone before us marked with the indelible sign of faith. I may not be alone in this thinking. Theirs was not a sophisticated age as ours; there was little or no electricity, there were no mobile phones nor internet connections; there were little or no grand church edifices, no magnificent rectories and parish halls, there were no sophisticated sound systems or musical instruments, yet they had a strong and indelible Faith. I mean they had FAITH.

They were faithful in their pious practice of the Catholic Faith, they did not miss their daily morning prayers at the station Church, they did not miss their daily rosary, nor their divine mercy 3 'O clock prayer, they never ate their food without the grace before meal and they never failed to give thanks afterwards. Staying away from Sunday Mass or Service as the case may be, was unthinkable. They took up leadership roles in the various Church levels; station and parochial as well as in their various Church organizations and pious societies. Theirs was a spirituality based on service. I mean total service and dedication and not what they will stand

to gain from the Church. They sacrifice their resources to aid the Church and they treated everyone with equal respect and dignity. After a life well-lived they died at their appointed time in peace and now enjoying perfect rest with God.

Faith is a very important ingredient that many Christians are gradually missing in their life. Without faith, life becomes emptiness and nothingness. By Faith I do not mean those who flock around prayer houses seeking a miracle; I do not mean those who come to Church for the sake of economic and financial breakthrough; Faith is deeper than that. Today the prayer houses are filled to the brim and those who run them make a lot of money; this is due to just one reason - the failure of government and the economic system. Should there be a social security system that covers both health insurance and job security many prayer houses today will be empty. Should the hospitals be optimal in their services, the prayer houses will not be the last hope of the poor and the vulnerable. The Faith I am talking about is not that which seeks miracles, but it is Faith that lives in the ordinary circumstances of life in fidelity to God and the Church. It is a Faith that reaches out to others. It is a Faith that is convinced. It is a Faith that is the result of the freewill and human option.

My grandparents had such a strong and unique Faith and they were serious in handing on that same Faith to their children and the succeeding generations. Faith must be transmitted. A Faith that is not transmitted on to others was never a solid faith. Now we are beneficiaries of the ardent and strong Faith of our grandparents, how prepared are we to hand this Faith over to the next generation?

I am not against building sophisticated Cathedrals, Parish houses, Parish halls etc. However, experience shows that when Faith is not well-founded, built and made to grow and flourish sooner or later the Faith will perish and the Cathedrals, Parish houses and Parish halls will become mere

monuments and converted to tourist attractions. The experience of Europe should teach us. It is becoming a thing of concern when every priest or pastor who is sent to a parish or any other place of apostolate feels that his first and important task is to build, and erect magnificent edifices or infrastructures and he is viewed as a failure if he never succeeds in building any. No one asks him, how faithful he was to his pastoral to the sick, to the aged, to the catechumens, to the youths, to the stranded, to broken marriages and families. No one ask him how he was able to grow the young Christian communities, the pious societies but everyone wants to see him build a grand edifice and so write his name in the signs of times. This is dangerous to the Faith.

If sincere Faith does not build the cathedrals and the parish structures, these structures will outlive Faith, but if Faith builds structures, Faith will stand even when these structures collapse. There is need to go back to the drawing board, to the teaching of the Faith, to the practice of the Faith, to the living of the Faith. My grandparents taught me so many things, but the most important was that they taught me the value and irreplaceable role of Faith in the Christian life. From faith comes hope and love. A love that does not grow from faith is a mere cosmetic but a love that is the result of faith will stand firm. Little wonder the Holy Scripture says: “without FAITH one cannot please God.” (Cf. Heb 11: 6).

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