

Readings for the 20th Sunday after Pentecost

Ave Maria Catholic Church – Extraordinary Form

Ephesians 5:15-21

Watch carefully then how you live, not as foolish persons but as wise, making the most of the opportunity, because the days are evil. Therefore, do not continue in ignorance, but try to understand what is the will of the Lord. And do not get drunk on wine, in which lies debauchery, but be filled with the Spirit, addressing one another [in] psalms and hymns and spiritual songs, singing and playing to the Lord in your hearts, giving thanks always and for everything in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ to God the Father. Be subordinate to one another out of reverence for Christ.

John 4: 46-53

Now there was a royal official whose son was ill in Capernaum. When he heard that Jesus had arrived in Galilee from Judea, he went to him and asked him to come down and heal his son, who was near death. Jesus said to him, “Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.” The royal official said to him, “Sir, come down before my child dies.” Jesus said to him, “You may go; your son will live.” The man believed what Jesus said to him and left. While he was on his way back, his slaves met him and told him that his boy would live. He asked them when he began to recover. They told him, “The fever left him yesterday, about one in the afternoon.” The father realized that just at that time Jesus had said to him, “Your son will live,” and he and his whole household came to believe.

The Spirit of Faith

20th Sunday after Pentecost (TLM) – John 4: 46-53

Ave Maria Catholic Church, October 10, 2021 - Fr. David M Vidal

Today we hear how Jesus returns to Cana in Galilee, where he had made the water wine. That was the first sign of the presence of the Messiah and that was the beginning of his public life. Now, Jesus returns to Cana to teach us. He wants to correct our views, our thinking, and our hearts. Then, he admonishes us: *“Unless you people see signs and wonders, you will not believe.”*

Jesus returns to Cana in Galilee to teach us the importance of faith. Here, He does not use a parable. This time Jesus uses the living example of a father who is imploring for the life of his child who is about to die. The father is asking for Jesus’ presence. Perhaps, he thought: “Jesus needs to touch my child.” But Jesus’s answer is surprising. He will not go to Capernaum where the child was. He will simply say: “Go, your child will live.”

That was a matter of faith. That man had to trust in the words that were spoken. Even though he cannot see with his eyes the healing of his son, he trusts and accepts what his ears are hearing: and he believes.

Jesus returns to Cana in Galilee and makes this second sign, a mysterious sign, to teach us that in this life, we must live by faith.

We must be moved by the Spirit of Faith

There are two ways of looking at things. One view is what we may call the spirit of nature. According to this view, nothing goes beyond sensorial perception. Then, truth is only what we can see, feel, and touch. Here, there is no room for mystery, for the supernatural, and for the invisible.

Another view is what we may call the spirit of faith. We call it “spirit” because it is a special way of considering things, of seeing, judging, feeling, loving, willing, and acting. It is a particular disposition that shapes our judgments and acts. The spirit of faith is a special way of judging all things from a higher point of view, that is the supernatural point of view.

Let us find examples of the spirit of faith. In the letter to the Hebrews, it is said: *“By faith Abraham, when he was tried, offered Isaac: and he who had received the promises, offered up his only begotten son . . . accounting that God is able to raise up even from the dead . . . By faith he [Moses] left Egypt, not fearing the fierceness of the king [Pharaoh . . . for he persevered as if seeing the one who is invisible. [And] the time would fail me to tell of Gideon, Barak, Samson, Jephthah, David, and Samuel, and the prophets; who by faith conquered kingdoms, did what was righteous, obtained promises, closed the mouths of lions [like Daniel].*

And it concludes: *"Therefore, . . . let us persevere in running the race that lies before us while keeping our eyes fixed on Jesus, the leader and perfecter of faith."*

The more the spirit of faith increases in us, the more we will grasp the sense of the mystery of Christ.

Now, the spirit of faith must be present in us not just in a theoretical way, but in a practical way of living.

We should live according to the spirit of faith by judging all things under this superior light. Let us consider *God first of all*, then *our own soul*, next *our neighbor*, and finally *all the events of life*.

1. How is our Relationship with God according to the Spirit of Faith?

Faith teaches us that we must go beyond the noisy talk. How often do we say: *"Listen, Lord that your servant is talking,"* and we forget to say: *"Speak Lord that your servant is listening"*? Faith allows us to discover God in the silence. Faith allows us to find God in the quiet encounter with Him during prayer.

Why do we often miss the beauty of the interior life of prayer? Perhaps, it is because we are like people standing outside a cathedral and looking at the stained-glass windows just from outside. From the outside everything looks opaque and dark. However, if they could only go to the interior, they will see those stained glass-windows illumined by the sun, they will see how beautiful they are, and they will understand how important it is to go in.

Faith not only enlightens our prayer life. Faith does much more! Through faith, we recognize the supernatural treasures that God placed in us by baptism; we admire the value of a single Holy Communion; and we find consolation in God's mercy through the sacrament of reconciliation.

2. How do We see Ourselves according to the Spirit of Faith?

How many times we wrongly judge ourselves either by excess or deficiency. By excess, when we fall into the spirit of pride by judging us better than others; or when we think that what we possess is only the fruit of our own hands, that we are self-made and self-sufficient. By defect, when we do not see any good in ourselves and we are paralyzed in the inactivity of a low esteemed spirit.

However, faith wakes us up! Faith allows us to see that "every good gift comes from above!" and we are not owners but administrators of our lives. Faith helps us to be grateful and to use God's gifts with devotion and care; because we are not self-made, but we have been made.

Faith allows us to see that even our shortcomings are opportunities for a better use of God's gifts. With God's grace, we can overcome all obstacles! And He promised us that He will give us the graces we need: we simply must trust and work; and do so with our whole heart.

3. How do We see Our Neighbor according to the Spirit of Faith?

Sometimes, we only see in others what is on the surface. When this happens, our judgments of others are superficial and deformed by egoism, pride, jealousies, and other passions. Then, we may approve in our neighbor what pleases us and what is congenial to our taste and inclinations. As a result, we condemn in others what annoys us and offend others when they do not agree with us.

If we could see our neighbor in the light of faith, with a pure spiritual sight, then, our view will go further and higher. We will see them as children of God who are called to be with God for all eternity. We will see people redeemed by the blood of Christ who are called to be united to Jesus's redemption. Our supernatural view will allow us to see beyond flesh and blood, and it will elevate and purify our affections.

4. How do We see All Events according to the Spirit of Faith?

We should see all the events of our lives, pleasant or unpleasant, in the light of faith. It is natural to be happy in success and sorrowful in misfortunes. However, faith allows us to see through those events. St. Paul says: "*All things work for good for those who love God,*" (Rom. 8: 28); even contradictions, unforeseen difficulties, and even sin (as St Augustine says), if we humble ourselves.

In the injustices of men, we should discover the justice of God who knows how to lead us to the good and corrects us, as his children. We need to see the merciful hand of the Provident Father who allows trials and purifications for our good.

We shouldn't be like people who need "signs and wonders" in order to believe. We are called to be people of faith, and we must be guided according to this higher supernatural light in all the aspects of our life: in our relationship with God, in the knowledge of ourselves, in our relationship with others, and in the consideration of all events.

May Our Blessed Mother help us to profess the Creed in times of peace and in moments of trials. May we learn to perceive the beauty of the Mystery of Faith. Amen.