

Dear Brothers and Sisters



“O woman, great is your faith! Let it be done for you as you wish.”

We have received, just like everyone else, the gift of life. But we have also received, unlike many others, the gift of faith.

Faith is given at the moment of Baptism. This gift is unearned, unmerited, and given gratuitously to us. Why to us and not others? The election of God is a mystery, in fact throughout the Scriptures He often chooses the weak, the least likely choice.

Faith can be small or great. It depends on our own cooperation with the grace that has been given to us. Faith is not a right, but it does hold a responsibility. The faith we have been given can grow or remain stagnant. It can make a difference in our life, or make no impact whatsoever.

You see two people for example, one is Baptized and the other is not. Do you see any difference in them? Or do they have the same attitudes, the same values, the same principles? Is there any difference in the goals they pursue in life? Is there a difference in how they raise their children? In their family values?

Faith is not magical – abracadabra, hey presto, you are baptized, you have faith, you are a Christian! Well, that is true ontologically – there is, so to speak, a DNA change in our soul at the moment of Baptism, but that change can be effective, or not, it depends.

We can presume to have faith – I am Catholic, I am Christian, I received my sacraments, I go to Church...therefore I have faith. But is that so?

The woman in today's Gospel had, according to Jesus, 'great faith.' She had more faith than others, more than the disciples, more than the religious elite in the Temple, more than those whose profession and job description was religion itself.

How did her faith become great? What did she do to earn this acclamation from the Lord? More to the point, what can we do to allow our faith to become great?

Should we pray a lot? The Buddhists and Moslems pray much more than we ever will, yet they do not have faith.

Should we be holy and pure? Our Orthodox Jewish brethren maintain rigorous rules and regulations, abstaining from all sorts of impurity, yet neither do they have faith in the sense that we are talking about.

Should we be generous and charitable? There are many non-believers, agnostics, and even atheists who give their time and resources to social outreach and aid to the poor, and they do this out of common humanity, without claiming whatsoever or pretending to have faith.

Should we succor the sick and the infirm? The world is full of doctors and hospitals that do this without professing at all to do so out of faith.

Faith is an encounter with a living person – Jesus Christ Risen from the dead. This encounter awaits each of us in the Liturgy we will celebrate together this weekend. A seat will be waiting for you.

Fr. Sean