

30<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time 2017 A

***“I believe in God.”*** In a few minutes, we will say those words together in the Creed, professing the faith that brings us here, because somehow we have experienced God – or perhaps are searching for God. To believe in God – that is, to trust God and even more, to LOVE God, as Jesus says today – is a courageous stand. In a world so troubled, where so many tragedies, divisions, and wars test our faith, we do well to reflect from time to time ... what makes ME believe?

Each Lent, when we pray the Stations of the Cross, we begin with the scene of Jesus, the accused, standing before Pilate, the judge. All of salvation history is summed up in that apparently simple scene: ***God on trial, God put to the test.*** In Genesis, we hear the lie of the serpent that God does not really desire human happiness, and the seed of doubt in God is planted in the human heart. ***In the desert wandering after the Exodus***, the people grumble against God and Moses with the question: “Is the Lord in our midst or not?” As we heard from Exodus, God has to remind His people that He will hear the cry of the poor ... that God is truly present, listening for us, not merely a concept or idea. ***At the beginning of His ministry***, Jesus is tempted by Satan to prove His claim by turning stones into bread, risking His life, taking on earthly power: **God put to the test**. We hear the Pharisees continue this theme, **testing** Jesus with the question: Which command of the Law is greatest?

Pope Benedict once discussed this testing of God. He wrote: ***“God has to submit to experiment. He is tested as products are tested. He has to submit to the conditions we say are necessary if we are to reach certainty”*** [end quote]. Indeed, the very history of our scientific age begins with that same search, ***the desire to be certain, to find truth, to know for sure***. But scientific truth, real as it is, only goes so far. There are other questions, other needs, that human knowledge cannot answer or fulfill. Most often, it is suffering and loss that bring these questions into sharp relief, and they take some form of the basic and agonizing question – WHY? Why do bad things happen? Why does God allow it? Why doesn’t God do something? ***In the face of these, science falls silent, and we need faith to speak.***

Faith is not simply a substitute for knowledge, a kind of placeholder until answers emerge. Faith is essentially different. As Pope Benedict wrote: *Faith means the same thing as I trust you or even I rely upon you. The basic form of Christian faith is not 'I believe something' but ' **God, I believe you.**'*” So our Creed is less a list of ideas we hold, and more a statement of TRUST, a belief that GOD IS RELIABLE. The Profession of Faith commits not only our minds, but our whole selves, *to persevere in TRUSTING God even when we cannot understand God*. This is seen in Jesus’ answer to the question about the commandments: not an arbitrary list of things to do or avoid, but the conditions of a relationship: to LOVE God and our neighbor, to entrust ourselves to God and to do whatever love requires.

Science makes us researchers; faith makes us pilgrims. Science says: “I’ll believe when I see;” Faith says, *“I’ll truly see when I believe.”* Science suggests a future that ends in nothingness, the universe slowly winding down to a stop, or just an endless cycles of beginnings and endings; Faith reveals the Resurrection, the beginning of all things made new.

In His final hours, Jesus unwinds the long history of doubt in God with those timeless words: *“Let this Cup pass me by; still, not as I will, but as You will.”* And that trust in God, despite all appearances, is completed at Calvary: “Father, into Your hands I commend my life.” Faith which entrusts our lives to God allows us *to be certain, to find truth, to know for sure*. As we profess our faith today, and say those words: “I believe in God,” may we mean them as Jesus did ... I too trust God, so I too can say: “Father, into Your hands I commend my life.”