

Easter Sunday: 12 April 2020

A circus high wire walker decided to perform the greatest feat of his career: walk on a wire suspended above the Niagara Falls. The big day came; a huge crowd gathered. The high wire walker signaled for the crowd to be quiet and asked them, “Do you believe I can make it across?” “Yes!” they shouted. He asked again, “Do you really believe I can go from here to the other on this little wire?” “Yes, we have faith in you!” they screamed. A third time he asked, “Do you really have faith I can do it?” The crowd exploded, “Yes, yes, we have faith in you.” “Very well,” he said, “I want a volunteer to get on my shoulders, and we will do it together. Who will come with me?” There was dead silence. Faith is not a theory; faith must be put into action, or it has no reality.

The fruit of Faith is not feeling ‘special’ or ‘holy.’ Faith is putting into practice what one believes. A faith-filled life is expansive: a way of living in which actions shout, and words are few. Being faithful is a continuing spiritual awakening that changes us; true faith compels us to share with others what we receive. And, as with the high wire walker at Niagara Falls, faith always involves risk.

How do we live a faith-filled life? First desire God. The spiritual life is built not on seeking spiritual experiences but on longing God. Whatever one’s exact physical posture is the important thing is to “bend the knee of the heart.” That is, to humbly come before God to receive whatever God wishes to give us, and to be content with that, even if nothing seems to be happening.

What do we pray? Begin with gratitude—give thanks for all blessings, benefits, consolations and challenges in your life. Then comes self-offering—give yourself to God unreservedly each day—all that you are, your sins and failures, your triumphs and excellences. Prayers of petition are very important—ask for God’s power to be at work in you and through you. Intercession is often the easiest form of prayer for many—pray that others will receive what God knows is best for them. Express yet more gratitude, knowing that God hears our weakest, briefest prayer. End with praise to God the Holy Trinity, invoking the Name of Father, Son and Holy Spirit. Such prayer is simplicity itself and will speed you on the path of faith.

A second action of faith is this: Surrender your right to be selfish, self-serving and self-judging; put this into practice in every relationship and environment. See, or assume, the good in others; see, or assume, that others’ have struggles just as difficult or more so than your own; see, or assume, that others are likely as messed up as you are, or more so; practice compassion; pray for those who bother you.

Third, to be yet more faithful expand your vision: read and study the Bible and holy authors; join in study with others so that you may learn from their wisdom and share your own; ask questions, be inquisitive; do not settle for what you think you know—ignorance is not a virtue; whether face-to-face or online get yourself into Christian Education.

Next, the faithful are part of, not apart from, a community of fellow ‘thirsters’ for God. ‘An isolated Christian is an ineffectual Christian.’ Jesus calls us into the Church for our good. Yes, the Church will drive you crazy, at times, will break your heart, as will any relationship in which you are invested. Think of the Church like this: we are a collection of failed human beings who cannot live without God’s help. Church is where we learn to love one another, where we may safely see our failings and be changed through God’s grace; where we learn to serve and be served, forgive and be forgiven, so that together we serve the world for Christ. This is a high ideal of the Church—it is the one to which you are called.

Many people when asked to describe Christians say we are closed-minded, judgmental, hypocritical, fixated on non-essentials. We shouldn’t ignore the perceptions of those who dismiss or hate us. The solution is not in defending ourselves. The way forward is for us to be carriers of God’s mercy, love and hope into every relationship and environment, to *be* the presence and love of Jesus in the lives of others.

The crux of Easter is this: “Do you believe Jesus got up, and is acting in your life, in others’ lives and in the world today?” If you believe that Jesus is alive and if you yearn for his power to work in your life and through you into the lives of others, then you are in for heaps of risk. But you are not alone, you are never alone; you are surrounded by other riskers, other seekers, and Christ is with us always. So, let’s step out together. Amen.