

# Encouragement Encouragement

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*Called to Faith or Works... a Conflict?*

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It is strange how two little words have caused so much conflict between denominations and people and have also led to confusion, division and misunderstanding. Jesus shows us by his own life that both are important and so interrelated that they have to be identified and understood both together and separately. . We have Jesus' words that belief in Him is the first step to Salvation as He is the Way, the Truth and the Life. We also have countless examples of the work that He did to heal, restore, to show life not least in His sacrificial death. As the old song said: 'love and marriage go together like a horse and carriage' - so do faith and works. There is no doubt that without faith and only good works we cannot count ourselves as Believers. No matter how much good we do, without the power of grace and God within us, our actions may be humanly excellent and well intentioned, but they are not Christian with a capital C. Within us as believers we have a resource not of our making.



We have to believe in the power of Him who saves and then do what He calls us to do.

As St James says in his first letter (Ch. 2 vs 14-18), 'You say that you have faith and another has good works. I will prove to you that I have faith by showing you my good deeds – now you prove that you have faith without any good deeds to show?'

Love of God and love of neighbour is crucial and central to our lives as Christians. For a Christian there is always more that we can do. This can be in any sphere of life including the Church. One Pastor recently, said after a life changing event, where he nearly lost his life, that he became aware of his 'not-enoughness'. We can never say that we have done enough. (Pastor Robert Morris.)

This surely should be our cry, our banner, what can I do, what more can I do? So much time is lost and wasted by believing that we cannot do something, or that it is somebody else's responsibility, not my job, or nothing to do with us, even - what if I fail? What

we are called to do may require sacrifice or learning a new skill or even forgoing an activity we enjoy but we are asked to bear fruit and give of ourselves.

This month we have many great Saints to think about. It is unimaginable how many great things would not have been done for people without the courage of St Francis, initially a layman, who simply responded to the comment by Jesus to 'build/repair my church'. The Franciscan community has been stalwart in its good deeds, evangelical work and action over the centuries. Furthermore, the great St Teresa of Avila, Doctor of the Church and teacher, reformer and founder would not have given us the wisdom which the Holy Spirit planted in her soul if

she had turned her back on the Source. It was not easy for her either and very much counterculture at the time especially for a woman. There are also two Saints notable for their 'listening skills' St Margaret Mary Alacoque and St Faustyna who spoke of the amazing 'loveingness' of Jesus and served in their communities.

There are many jobs to be done in our own faith communities. Shortages of workers in the vineyard, priest and lay alike, are impeding the work of The Saviour. The following two accounts/reflections, one by someone fairly newly called to serve and the second with many years of service, reveal two works that many would probably not be aware of or think as important or significant yet are crucial...

... 'The call to be a Sacristan, like any other 'call' is as much an acceptance that 'someone should do it...' that someone might be **you**, personally. When I was invited to the post by my Parish Priest I doubted I could do it – but God has made it possible. The 'job' is first recorded in the early church as 'being responsible for the material goods of the church' – this principle is reflected in the understanding of **how** and **why** some objects, gestures etc. are established and necessary, others may be adjusted as needed. Much of what is

required is learned as one does the job. Anyone can learn to do this week by week. Like a gardener, a Sacristan 'prepares' the ground for the Mass and must believe in the Truth of Jesus' Real Presence to function properly. Other services and duties only follow from this.

The Church provides training but that of itself is rarely enough - a thorough 'immersion' in the Faith should usually precede any formal training. I have found the post helps me to get to know my parish community better, how it works in practice. As for myself, and is a vital part of my personal journey and helps me understand the bigger picture. I often feel the position reflects a point where 'spiritual meets material' - and the former is what matters. If **you** think seriously about the Mass, feel the Church 'could be better served' then perhaps this is the next step for you..... Pray about it.'

*Chris Young*

'Every sincere Christian is a servant of God. But those who serve at the altar and handle sacred vessels possibly even more so. To be a good Sacristan one should check there are no particles left in the Ciborium nor traces of 'liquid' in the Chalice. The Purificators should also be examined in case the little pieces of Host have become attached. I do this daily. I do not worry about worthiness. Far from defiling the sacred vessels they sanctify us.

*John Conlon*

The deeds or works that we are called to do will differ from person to person and in every circumstance of our life.. The list is endless. Many opportunities exist, whether it is by volunteering to help a group or charity, within the church itself or in actual employment,. They may not be big things but important ones, requiring quiet service that may not be visible to others or even rated as important but nevertheless, a service. There are many such works, like informing others of events, knocking on a door of a neighbour, regularly tidying up after an event, praying for a sick person etc. - the list is endless but we have to be creative and unafraid. St Thérèse of Lisieux whose feast is on the first day of October found that her 'Little Way' brought her directly to her essence as a Christian and that is to Love.

The word of A *Special Pastor* highlights some of the issues....'At our Baptism Jesus calls each one of us by name just as he called the Twelve Apostles to be His followers and be a witness to Him in the world. What an

*exalted dignity it is to be called by the Son of God Himself. A Christian is a walking mystery because God has come to dwell within us, Christians are not just 'nice people'; they are a new creation, for the living God actually comes to rule their minds. Do we really have a proper sense of our Christian dignity - do we recognize that dignity in others too? St. Paul was saddened to see that this was not the case with some Christians in Corinth. They dragged one another into court over squabbles instead of settling them themselves in Charity. When we fail to act with Christian dignity we hurt Christ more than non-Christians do. Enemies within are more dangerous than those without'*

*Special Pastor*

We are called through faith to act, to demonstrate our love. If we do not do so our faith can become simply a system of beliefs and practices. If our faith does not bring us to love more and serve more then it does not bear witness to the Gospel. It does not exemplify that we have been Saved and with great gratitude serve.

*Halina Holman*

### **Pope Francis**

"Having faith isn't having knowledge. Instead, it is 'receiving God's message' as brought by Christ. There can be people who know very little or nothing about doctrine, 'but have lots of faith' because rather than embracing 'abstract truths,' they embrace the living Christ. Faith and witness are indissoluble. Faith is an encounter with Jesus Christ, with God, and always leads to witnessing. A faith without works, a faith that doesn't get you involved, isn't faith. It's words and nothing more than words." *Rome 2014*



*Thessalonians 1:11 To this end we always pray for you, that our God may make you worthy of his call, and may fulfil every good resolve and work of faith by his power...*

### **Feast Days in October**

1<sup>st</sup> St. Thérèse of Lisieux    2<sup>nd</sup> The Guardian Angels

4<sup>th</sup> St Francis of Assisi

5<sup>th</sup> St Faustyna Kowalska

9<sup>th</sup> Blessed John Henry Newman

10<sup>th</sup> St Paulinus of York

11<sup>th</sup> **St John XXIII Pope**

12<sup>th</sup> St Wilfred

13<sup>th</sup> St Edward the Confessor

15<sup>th</sup> St Teresa of Avila

16<sup>th</sup> St Margaret Mary Alacoque

17<sup>th</sup> St Ignatius of Antioch

18<sup>th</sup> **St Luke Evangelist**

19<sup>th</sup> St Isaac Joques,

19<sup>th</sup> St Paul of the Cross

22<sup>nd</sup> **St John Paul II**

24<sup>th</sup> St Anthony Claret Bishop

25<sup>th</sup> Six Welsh Martyrs