

# 26<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

## St. Mark 9:38-43, 45, 47-48

Courage is not the absence of fear; instead, it is the capacity to move ahead in spite of fear. Our Faith is bound up in courage. Think of the great men and women of the Bible, our fathers in faith, Abraham and Isaac, or Jacob who wrestled with the angel of God shouting, "I will not let you go unless you bless me." Then there are the great prophets like Jeremiah and Isaiah. And there is St. Joseph, who stood night and day by the Blessed Virgin Mary and the child Jesus to defend them against King Herod's soldiers sent to kill all first-born boys. And, of course, there is the Blessed Virgin Mary, to whom so much was promised yet suffered so greatly but persevered in faith and is, now, the mother of the Church. Above all others, there is Christ, who the night before his crucifixion prayed in agony in the garden of Gethsemane asking His Father in heaven that He might avoid this torment, but who, ultimately, accepted whatever He was expected to sacrifice. These men and women did not do these things because they were easy, they did them because they were hard and so it made them prove to themselves, to others and to God who they really were. It defined their character.

A few years ago a young man, nineteen-years old, stood with three friends protesting murder. They did not use violence, they did not shout slogans, instead they prayed the Rosary. The police arrived and the other men with this man ran away for fear of being arrested. But this nineteen-year old man stood firm. He was ordered by the police to move on but he refused. He remained where he was because he said that he stood in truth. But he was grabbed by the police and he was thrown into the back of a police van. He was taken to gaol and left there overnight. The thing is that this did not happen in Syria or Iran or other places in the news at the moment. This happened in Fairfield. This man

was praying the Rosary outside an abortion clinic. He did not stop anyone from entering the building but his being there embarrassed those there and so it meant that some walked away. It meant that the clinic lost money and so they called the police. When he was asked if he regretted what he had done he said that he would do it again because some things are bigger than himself and in our life we will be called to sacrifice ourselves for Him who sacrificed Himself for us. That is courage and that is Faith.

It is easy to abandon Him in whom we are baptised. It is easy to avoid Mass. It is easy to not make our confession. It is easy to go along with everyone else. It is difficult to stand firm in Faith. It is difficult to make a sacrifices. Our Faith is the way of the Cross; it is the way of Christ and so it is our way, because there is no other way.

Unfortunately, today, so many of us do not stand up for the faith. Instead we have been persuaded by the media or by others to believe that things which are really sinful are really good. Instead of asking why the Church believes what she does people simply condemn the Church as being intolerant or behind-the-times. The fact is that the Church should not be interested in popularity. Christ was not interested in popularity. When He professed the truth many of His disciples abandoned Him but He did not change what He taught just so that He would be liked. The truth is not always popular. How can it be when Christ revealed to us the truth but that truth was that we must repent?

Our society is obsessed with the idea of “my choice” and “my rights” and treats them as though they are the highest things, as though we are the highest beings. It is true that you and I must make choices, that is the gift of free-will given to us by Almighty God, but use that gift wisely. We live in a world which does what is popular. I pray that you will do, instead, what is right.