

27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Luke 17:5-10

What causes a man who has watched his family killed in a car accident to become an alcoholic, to lose his job, and to suffer morbid depression, while another man who has seen his family killed can admit his grief and find not a way to get over it but to live with it and to move onwards? There may be many reasons for this such as character or circumstance but it can also be faith. Why does a fifteen year old girl so desperately desire to enter the convent that she petitions the Pope for his permission? Or a thirty-eight year old woman abandon a life of certainty to live on the streets with the poorest of the poor? Or a sixteen-year old boy stand up in front of his school and say without shame that he wants to live a life of celibacy in the service of God? Why? Because it is a belief in something greater than themselves and a sense of duty to that which is greater.

Since the nineteenth-century we have been told that religion is all but dead and that secularism and reason alone is the only intelligent and possible way forward. So why then do more people today claim an association with religion than they did one hundred years ago? And why is it estimated that in forty years time over 80% of the world's population will claim to be religious?

The fact is that faith, whether people like it or not, matters. So it is not the religious who are out of step with the modern world, but the secularists themselves. Human beings are fundamentally programmed to believe in God, whatever individuals might call Him.

In the midst of a culture that holds choice to be a right, the idea that anyone ought to do anything is unacceptable. The fact is, however, that we ought to worship God. The difficulty is that God is often treated as a service like so many other things. Today if you fly you are not a passenger, you are a

customer, and airlines are no longer airlines but travel service providers. If you see a doctor you are no longer a patient, you are a customer, and doctors are no longer doctors but health service providers. I have even heard parishioners called not parishioners but clients, so that, effectively the Church is not a Church but a faith service provider. This is why it is so difficult to persevere in faith because there is a *quid pro quo* attitude that says if I give you something then you must give me something, so that if I pray to God then God should give me something back. This is made even more understandable when we hold, as St. John writes, that God is love. If God loves me then why do bad things happen? But however understandable this might be we are misled if we think of God in the same way that we think of man. God is not a service provider, He is our Creator, Redeemer and Sanctifier. He loves each and every man, woman and child with such fervour that even if I or you were the only person on earth He would still go all the way to the Cross to suffer and die. So it is our duty, because God loves us, to worship God and to give Him glory, for He does not promise us freedom in this life but freedom in the next. St. Teresa of Calcutta said: "I would not touch a leper for a thousands pounds, but I will touch him for the love of God." This is why the Lord says as He does in the Gospel, "Is [the master] grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

I ought to love God because He is God. I ought to worship God because He is worthy of worship. I ought to give glory to God for He is worthy of glory. I ought to serve God because He deserves to be served. St. Teresa of Calcutta said: "Holiness is not the luxury of the few; it is a simply duty, for you and for me."