

29th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

St. Mark 10:35-45

There is a story told by Padre Pio. He said, "One evening, while I was alone in [the chapel] to pray, I heard the rustle of [clothes] and I saw a young man that stirred next to the high altar. It seemed that the young monk was dusting the candelabra and straightening the flower vases. I thought he was Padre Leone rearranging the altar and since it was supper time, I went to him and I told him: 'Padre Leone, go to dine, this is not the time to dust and to straighten the altar'. But a voice, that was not Father Leone's answered me: 'I am not Padre Leone'. 'And who are you? ', I asked him. 'I am a brother of yours that made the novitiate here. I was ordered to clean the altar during the year of the novitiate. Unfortunately, many times I didn't reverence Jesus while passing in front of the altar, thus causing the Holy Sacrament that was preserved in the tabernacle to be disrespected. For this serious carelessness, I am still in Purgatory. Now God with His endless goodness, sent me here so that you may quicken the time I will enjoy in Heaven. Pray for me.' I believed I was being generous to that suffering soul, so I exclaimed: 'you will be in Paradise tomorrow morning, when I will celebrate Holy Mass'. The soul cried out: 'Cruel!' Then he disappeared weeping. That complaint produced in me a wound to the heart that I have felt and I will feel my whole life. In fact I would have been able to immediately send that soul to Heaven but I condemned him to remain another night in the flames of Purgatory."

The reality is that many people who profess to be Catholic do not take the Catholic faith seriously. Many treat it more as an accessory which they wear now and then, to be put on or taken off depending on the day. But our faith is not some casual or part-time job where we clock on and clock off. It must be our very beginning, our very end and everything in between. If we expect that

God will grant to us a full-time Heaven then we had better grant to Him a full-time faith.

The problem we face today is that for most of our lifetimes, the faith has been watered down and made so much less than it is. Whether this has been done for some mistaken sense of trying to make life easier for people or whether out of embarrassment of professing something which goes so much against the world or whether because many, if not most, people just don't really believe any of this anymore, it is a nothing less than one of the greatest tragedies we will ever face.

We have been told that we shouldn't be so caught up with piety and acts of devotion because God doesn't really care about all of that—He just wants us to be happy. Well if God doesn't care then it just made my life a whole lot easier. Because why should I bother with all of this if, in the end, God doesn't really care?

So just like the young man in the story told by Padre Pio we do away with reverence for God, we do away with worrying about all those "little things" because they are not really important. But here, this young man found out to his pain that these so-called "little things" can mean the difference between suffering and joy in the life to come. And if you think about this story carefully you will see that a "little thing" like genuflecting before the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle, for example, really tells what we believe. If I believe that Our Lord is truly present—Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity—in the Blessed Sacrament in the tabernacle then how could I not fall on my knees out of fear and awe at so great a mystery that lies right before me? But if I don't believe that God is truly there, or that God doesn't really mind if I ignore Him now and then, I have said that I don't really have that much time or even interest in Him.

This young man was denied Heaven for a time because he did not have enough of a love of God. So how could he, or any of us, hope to be in Heaven

—a place of the eternal worship of God in love—if on earth we decide God,
and our faith, is just part-time?