



## The Parish of Saints Anthony & Aloysius

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### Homily at Mass 21<sup>st</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B – 26 August 2018

“As for me and my House, we will serve the Lord”. The Old Testament hero Joshua puts his hand up for God in today’s first reading. Likewise St Peter also stands up for Jesus in the Gospel, the last passage from the great teaching on the Eucharist we have been listening to from the Gospel of St John over recent Sundays. Both Joshua and Peter make a profession of faith – a personal commitment to the Lord who calls us to believe in him, trust him, and throw our lot in with him.

The keynote of today’s Word of God is faith. Faith does mean “to believe” but it is more than that. Many in our society find faith difficult if not impossible. There are some who say they just can’t believe in God – they’re either genuine atheists or cultural atheists – people swept along by the tide of modern secular life. We could also observe that there are people who believe that there is a God, but have no practical faith in him. People can believe that God exists – that he is real, he is there, perhaps distant and unimaginable, but a reality nonetheless. On the other hand, we profess faith in God. We say today as we do each Sunday – “I believe”. This makes our recitation of the Creed a bold personal step, supported by the “I”, which the Church, the “I” we share with everyone gathered at Mass here at St Anthony’s/Aloysius today along with countless millions in churches throughout the world right now. Belief can be perhaps a “head thing” – what we know about God or Jesus or the Eucharist or Our Lady or the Sacraments. Faith, however, flows from the heart. Husbands and wives have faith in each other, flowing from love and the promises of marriage. Faith includes trust, but faith can also survive a betrayal of trust, as well as disappointments, hurdles and many tests.

Faith is always a personal commitment. The faith of the Church carries us in times when faith is difficult or fragile. It’s always inspiring and encouraging to hear an individual adult make a profession of faith, especially at, say, the Easter Vigil. Do you remember making a profession of faith at Confirmation? The Church loves to celebrate the gift of faith on Easter Sunday. Together we shout aloud “*I do believe*”. I do believe in God the Father. I do believe in Jesus Christ, Mary’s Son, crucified and risen, I do believe in the Holy Spirit. I do believe in the Catholic Church. I do believe in the hope of Heaven. And then the priest sprinkles Easter water on us – showering us with the new life and faith of baptised children of God.

At Mass, just after the consecration of the bread and wine, the priest proclaims “The Mystery of Faith”. And we take up an acclamation that sings of the mystery of the Eucharist, the mystery of Christ’s saving death and resurrection, the mystery of Christ’s living presence with us. At the end of his Gospel teaching on the Eucharist – “my flesh is real food, my blood

is real drink” – Jesus also proclaims “the mystery of faith”. Some of his followers could not say ‘Amen’, they could not accept his teaching, his mystery. They could not profess faith in him. But then Peter speaks up on behalf of the other apostles, he speaks for you and me: “you are the Holy One of God.” Could Peter believe what he was saying? Who can say. But was Peter professing faith – a personal commitment to Jesus his friend and Lord? Yes, he most certainly was.

This faith would be tested, but in the end it triumphed, as Peter followed Jesus even to his own death upside down on a cross, in what we call today St Peter’s Square in Rome, in the year 67.

Friends, faith brings us to the Church for Sunday Mass. Faith inspires our prayer, as we place trust in God who we love as our Father, the source of life, blessing, peace, and every good thing. Faith sustains us in every experience of life, all its twists and turns, our disappointments, sickness and sadness: faith sustains our hope. Faith also nourishes love; faith can inspire heroism, even martyrdom. Faith can move mountains and face challenges; love will conquer them! Faith is deeply personal, it grows with the experiences of life, surviving even the hardest knocks. But as Christians we also share faith, and find encouragement in this community of faith, our parish, our Sunday Mass, the Eucharist, *the* sacrament of faith.

We look up at the Cross and make Peter’s profession of faith our own act of faith and love:

“Lord you have the message of eternal life: we believe ... we know that you are the Holy One of God.”