



## The Parish of Saints Anthony & Aloysius

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### Homily at Mass 24<sup>th</sup> Sunday of Ordinary Time, Year B – 16 September 2018

Faith and all the good that flows from it has been front of mind for us over recent weeks. Our Parish Stewardship renewal has called us to think about 3 things that we share together: our faith in God and his Church; our community life that is centred on the Eucharist and our weekly Sunday Mass; and our future – the mission God calls us to hear in Glen Huntly-Caulfield, the good work of charity, service, outreach, witness, parish life and home and family life as well. Our personal and generous pledge of support in Parish Stewardship is a tremendous good work. When it's associated with the gifts and talents we can swing to parish life, it's even better!

Today is not the first time that we hear St Peter make a bold profession of faith in Jesus this year. Today Jesus asks the Twelve, "who do you say I am?" St Peter gives voice to our belief in Jesus: "You are the Christ". Just a month or so ago we listened to a series of readings from the Gospel of St John, where Jesus reveals himself as the Bread of Life, the Living Bread from Heaven. We all know that some people accepted this teaching while many walked away, unable to understand or believe that Jesus can and does give himself to us as "real food and real drink". In the end Jesus gave the apostles freedom to walk away too. But Peter – speaking on behalf of the Twelve and for you and me – says to Jesus: Lord, to whom shall we go? We believe ... we know that you are the Holy One of God".

Faith is for us a list of things we believe. We repeat this list week by week in the Creed. The word Creed comes from Latin *credere* "to believe". In a few moments we'll list off all those things "I believe" and "we believe": We share faith and belief in God our Creator and Father; in Jesus, Mary's Son, crucified and risen, the Lord who will one day return as judge and call us to Heaven; in the Holy Spirit, the Catholic Church, baptism, the forgiveness of sins, eternal life. You and I also share faith and belief in the Eucharist: the great Sacrament of faith. We acclaim Jesus in this Sacrament "the mystery of faith"

Faith is also something that has a home deep in our hearts. Faith supports us, it sustains our hope, it gives us eyes to see life differently. St Teresa Benedicta of the Cross perished at Auschwitz in 1942. Edith Stein was the youngest of 11 children, born to a devout Jewish family in 1891. By her teens however she had become an atheist. In later life, as a Carmelite nun, she recalled certain experiences which God used to bring her to Christian faith. She once visited a woman – friend who had just lost her soldier husband in one of the battles of World War I. Knocking on her door, Edith expected that her friend would be utterly distraught, angry, lost in tears and grief. As they sat down and spoke, certainly the woman was teary and said with the shock of widowhood. But the woman – a practising and believing Catholic – also shared her certain faith with Edith that she believed in the resurrection of Jesus and the

promise of eternal life. “I shall see my husband again”, she said. “My husband is now with God”.

Faith is also a personal relationship with God – as personal as Peter speaking directly to Jesus in a village somewhere on the outskirts of Caesarea Phillipi, the ruins of which can still be visited in the northern part of Israel today. Faith flows from the heart. Faith expresses itself when we pray – sometimes our faith is bouyant and confident, and our prayer is joyfilled and easy. But sometimes – and we’ve all had experiences like this – sometimes we’re just holding on to our faith by the fingernails, it’s almost out of our grasp, it can seem that our faith is no bigger than the proverbial mustard seed. It’s then that we wonder how effective our prayer is, is it useful, will I ever see a result, is God listening? This is the sort of faith that seems to struggle in the cold shadow of the Cross, that cries out for light, for an answer, for hope, for God’s presence and his fatherly voice.

Faith flows from the heart and so do good works. St James makes the point that christian faith is a practical thing – it doesn’t just exist in the realm of ideas. It looks for practical expression, in signs of faith, acts of faith, works that show faith. At Mass together today and each Sunday we are a community of faith. Together we pray, sing, worship, listen to the Word of God, share in Holy Communion: our faith is nourished by God and one another. Words of kindness and encouragement, initiatives of service, thoughtfulness and compassion, sometimes even heroic deeds, are all signs of faith, works of faith that express love for God and neighbour.

St Francis is reputed to have told his brothers – “preach the Gospel always – use words only if necessary”.