



# The Parish of Saint Anthony Glen Huntly

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## Homily at Mass 27<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C – 6 October 2019

Do you ever feel that you are “running on empty”? Perhaps there’s a light flashing in your head like the little petrol bowser icon flashing on the dash board of your car. Your energy levels are low. You’re feeling down, heavy, depressed. Life seems to be made of more worries than joys. Your efforts go unrewarded. Criticism seems to assail you on all sides. You feel rattled, uneasy, disturbed, sad. We all go through these phases from time to time.

Did the apostles feel that they were “running on empty” when they cry out to Jesus today: “Increase our faith”. Rather than running to refill their tank, Jesus replies that just the smallest amount of faith – just a mere mustard seed – is enough. To imagine a mustard seed try to picture in your mind some bird seed or the seeds you see on top of a bread roll – sesame or poppy seeds. This is enough, Jesus seems to say: rely on that!

Had St Paul heard from his young friend Timothy whom he had ordained a priest and bishop of the church at Ephesus? You can visit the ruins of ancient Ephesus which still stand today in modern Turkey. The home Our Lady shared with St John after the resurrection of Jesus can still be visited at Ephesus. In ancient times Ephesus was one of the major cities of the Roman Empire. Governing the Christian church at Ephesus was no easy task, as every bishop today will readily agree. Perhaps the young Timothy was feeling the pressure of his job, feeling intimidated by older priests or lay members of the community. Perhaps he felt he was running on empty or, to use St Paul’s image, his flame was almost extinguished: “fan into a flame the gift God gave you when I laid my hands on you”. We believe that God’s gifts of grace are permanent, powerful, long lasting. Baptism and Confirmation are permanent gifts – they don’t expire, they have no use by date. Likewise the Sacrament of Holy Orders. All of us would be familiar with a phrase from one of the psalms: “You are a priest forever”. When God chooses a man for the priesthood or to be a bishop, when the Church passes on this gift of the Holy Spirit, the Bishop places his hands on the head of the one whom the Church calls to be priest and Bishop, shepherd and servant, the gift of ordination is permanent – a priest and Bishop will be a priest and bishop in heaven. Our parish bulletin today includes the 7 qualities of faith described by YOUCAT, the Catechism for young people, let’s look at them now.

Faith is first of all knowledge – but it can never be complete knowledge, sometimes not even certain or confident knowledge. At Mass we profess together “I believe” – we are each testifying to our faith and belief, but we also profess faith as one Body, one Holy People of God one Church. Amongst us today might be some who feel very confident and showing in their faith. There may also be at Mass today some who feel that they’re hanging on to God and to catholic life just by their finger nails. Today, friends cling on to the faith we share together and feel supported and strong as we profess our faith together and share in the great mystery of faith, the Eucharist.

Faith is God's gift to each of us, just like the gift of life, the gift of love, the gift of blue eyes or black hair, the gift of music or the gift of languages. And to allow the gift of faith to grow even stronger our prayer can be that of the apostles, "increase our faith" or the prayer of a poor dad in St Mark's Gospel: "Lord I do have faith ... help the little faith I have". Hearing this, perhaps some worried parents and grandparents might feel that this is just the prayer for children and grandchildren who seem to have wandered away from God, the church and the life of prayer and faith. At Mass today picture them, hold them up to the Lord, pray for them; "Lord, increase their faith".

Faith is a gift freely given by God and to which you and I freely respond. Faith must be more than words – faith reveals itself in acts of love, charity, mercy, kindness and compassion. St James is rather blunt when he says: "Faith without good works is dead". Faith sweetness life: our faith is nourished today and encouraged by the Word of God, our faith community gathered by God, the Eucharist and prayer we share together. During this week, wherever we are, whatever we do, our family life, our interactions at work, our attitudes, reactions, words and thoughts – all these must be perfumed by faith that believes, and faith that acts and serves and reaches out.

Our young parishioners may sometimes hear people say that they trust science more than faith. What does the word "science" mean? It means knowledge – human knowledge that never seems to be complete or perfect, there always seems to be ever more to learn, discover, explore. The same is true time of faith – beginning with the small mustard seed God plants in us, which takes root and grows every day of our lives, beginning with the water of Baptism. Only in heaven does faith become vision – when we will see the Face of God.