

19th Sunday in Ordinary Time.  
August 6 & 7, 2016

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My Dear Brothers and Sisters. I would like to take just one sentence out of all the readings in the liturgy of this Sunday. It is from the letter to the Hebrews. You remember? St. Paul wrote: 'Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.' And I repeat: 'FAITH IS THE **REALIZATION** OF WHAT IS HOPED FOR, AND **EVIDENCE** OF THINGS NOT SEEN.' Faith is about reality and is about real experiences beyond the sensory material world.

Let me illustrate this by just two examples. After Jesus has been crucified and died, two of the disciples went from Jerusalem to a place close by. They were full of sadness and disappointment about what happened, and Jesus caught up with them as they went, but they did not recognize him. Jesus explained to them that what happened was the way it had to be, and it has been foretold by the prophets. It was late by the time they arrived to their place and asked Jesus to stay with them for the evening meal. During the meal, Jesus took the bread and broke it and gave it to them, and at this moment their eyes were opened and they recognized him in the breaking of the bread. But Jesus vanished from their sight. This moment of recognition was the moment of the gift of faith. An experience way beyond the experiences of the material world.

Or think for a moment about Mary Magdalene. She went to the burial site of Jesus early in the morning and found the tomb empty. She cried because Jesus, whom she loved with her life, has been killed and now she could not find his body. There was a man standing nearby who asked her why she was crying. And she told him about her deep sorrow, thinking that he was the gardener. Then Jesus called her by name: 'Mary.' That was the moment of the gift of faith, when her eyes were opened and she recognized Jesus as she cried out: 'Teacher!', and embraced Jesus' feet.

My Dear Sisters and Brothers, Faith is a wonderful gift that only God can give. A gift that we need desperately. We are to ask for this gift all the time, and it is so readily given that even just asking for it is already an act of faith. Faith is not a conclusion of a logical syllogism, or that of a laborious scientific work, but a wonderful gift that reaches way beyond the sensory material world into a reality in God's loving and merciful presence. When our eyes are opened by the power of faith, we see and experience reality in its fullness.

And here is just a small but most practical fruit of all this: the key that resolves all controversy for ever between Faith and Science. Take, for instance, the Creation versus Evolution controversy that has been raging most destructively for over a century. In faith we realize that God created the world that we study in science. The ever advancing scientific knowledge enriches more and more our understanding of the created, and our faith in creation gives true meaning to what we know in science. There is no controversy here but mutual support, which should be always strengthened by mutual respect.

The disciples asked Jesus: 'Increase our faith'. I am very sure that this should be also our humble prayer, and that, even at the start, to be full of gratitude. Amen.