

JESUS BELIEVES IN US

Jn. 17:1-11.

How important it is that we should have faith in Jesus. In times of temptation, we need to believe that He is there to help us say no to sin. In days of discouragement, we need to believe that He can lift us. In times of poverty, we need faith in His care and provision. In times of moral failure, we need faith in His forgiveness. In fact every day of our lives, in a dozen different ways, we desperately need to believe in Our Lord.

I want to reverse that emphasis and think for a few moments of Jesus believing in us. This is precisely what today's Gospel is telling us. Jesus said, "I have given to them the words You gave Me and they have kept them."

This is a remarkable sentence. You could well ask, "How could Jesus speak like this the day before He died?" Tomorrow He knew He would die. His public ministry was over. He had given His teachings to these twelve men and poured out His life to so many and He had very little to show for it. The vast majority of people rejected Him and His message. Now He will preach and teach no more. He has handed the torch to these very plain, ordinary men and yet He confidently believes that it is in good hands.

All we can say is that He must have had a very profound faith in His first followers. He also has that same kind of faith in you and me. That seems an incredible thing. We have great difficulty in believing in each other, and much of the time we don't even believe in ourselves. How is it possible that Jesus believes in us? Let us see if we can make sense of all this.

First let us remember that Christ's faith is based on a **thorough knowledge**. He knew those men and women better than they knew themselves. The same can be said of

us. We all know we have a skeleton or two hidden away in some secret closet. We would prefer that they remain hidden from everybody else, but they are not secret to Jesus. Yet He believes in us. This is because if He knows our worst, He also knows our best and He also knows, with His help, what we can achieve. When Jesus looks at anyone He not only sees who they are, but what they can become. In Simon, the impetuous fisherman, He saw Peter, the rock of His Church. In Levi, the tax collector, He saw Matthew the author of one of the four Gospels. In John, the son of thunder, He saw the beloved disciple. In Zachaeus, the greedy tax collector, He saw a generous philanthropist. That is how Jesus knows you and me, and this is precisely why He has faith in us. He sees possibilities in every one of us that no one else has ever seen.

This faith that Jesus has in His followers is rooted in **unconditional love**. This seems hard to believe. Jesus staked His belief in His followers the night before He died, knowing full well of their infidelity. One would betray Him, others would forsake Him, and one would even deny Him. He knew all this long before it ever happened. Do you think He stopped loving them because of this? Certainly not. He loved them before it happened. He loved them during their disloyalty. He loved them when it was over. His love was not dependant on their loyalty.

Is there anyone listening to me whose heart is hurting with guilt? Are you ashamed of something you have done or something you have not done? Do you think that Jesus has stopped loving you because of this? May I assure you that His love for you has never wavered or changed one bit. I don't know how that makes you feel. I know how it made Peter feel. When He had realised what he had done, and when he remembered what Jesus had told Him, it broke his heart and he wept bitterly.

Lord Jesus, thank you for the faith You have in me. May it

A. SEVENTH SUNDAY OF EASTER.

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inspire me to believe in myself and live for You and others.