

Rev. Paul A. Hottinger

Faith Is Realization and Evidence Third Week in Ordinary Time Saturday,
January 31, 2015 8:15 AM **Heb 11:1-2, 8-19; Mk 4:35-41** St. John Bosco, priest
(It's a personal understanding of something that isn't exactly understandable in a general way.)

“Do you not have faith?”

Well, this is really a loaded question. **What is faith?** Some people have used the word “faith” meaning belief. But the kind of belief most people talk about won't help in a storm, so it's not the faith Jesus was talking about, not in that case.

The Letter to the Hebrews has this beautiful paean really to the whole idea of faith: What is faith? It's not a belief. It's not something that you can articulate very simply. We do have articles of faith, but articles of faith are summaries of something else. **It has to do with our participation in a mystery we do not understand**, and it is a trusting participation, and it is a willing participation, so that **we willingly allow something we don't understand to guide and direct our lives**. This is sometimes called providence, **divine providence**.

“Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.”

Now **why is faith evidence?** That's really a very profound thought. Faith is evidence **because as we trust in the providence of God, that itself yields evidence**; but it isn't evidence for anybody but **the one who yields. By my trusting in God and following God's directions, I could be assured that God is directing me; but I can't give that assurance to somebody else**. I could witness to it, but then a person could say, “Well, that is what you think; you are just imagining that.” **So it is very personal**, this kind of thing. “Faith is the realization,” a very personal realization. You could say **it's a personal understanding of something that isn't exactly understandable in a general way**; it's just for you, a “realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen.” Well, of course what is

seen is a little sector of reality. We know very well, even from superficial study of the world. that it's enormous; the universe is enormous. We can't really grasp it, and that's just the physical part. But this is talking about something else. Even behind the physical manifestation of the universe, what makes it? What gives it meaning and purpose? What leads it? What is directing it?

So then he goes on to talk about **Abraham and various figures from the Old Testament, how they trusted. They let God lead them.** Even when it seemed what God was saying was crazy or ridiculous or too much, they went along. And **two things happened.** First of all, **they were blessed;** and second of all, **those around them were blessed. That is what's supposed to happen.** When we follow God and we listen to God's direction and we comply with what God asks of us, we are blessed. We are supposed to be, and those around us are supposed to be blessed.

Now **blessing does not mean exempt from problems,** never; it never meant that. Exempt from problems? No. Exempt from **illness?** No. Exempt from **dying?** Certainly not, but blessed nonetheless: **blessed in the sense of enlightened, blessed in the sense of experiencing something healing.** That itself is a foreshadowing of something better, which is what he is talking about: the promise, the hope, the better land, a world we don't yet quite grasp but we are going toward. **To keep this in mind is very important for even civilization itself,** which is one of the reasons why modern civilization is in such a fix, why it's spinning its wheels. It doesn't know where to go. It doesn't have any real hope in something beyond its own power to produce. This is a very dangerous situation. If you read this section of Hebrews, chapter 11: 1 through 19, you will get a sense of it.