

**Testing**    Sixth Week in Ordinary Time    Monday, February 12, 2018    8:15 AM    **Jas 1:1-11; Mk 8:11-13**    (Do you really think it's human nature that affords us any semblance of peace, or is it really a miracle?)

**“Why does this generation seek to sign?”**

**Both readings are about testing.** The gospel is the **Pharisees that want to test Jesus to see whether he can produce a sign from heaven that would authenticate his teaching.** In James, James is saying that we should rejoice when our faith is tested. So it's a very different perspective. James means our faith being tested by adverse circumstances in life, and he says we should rejoice when that happens. So **in James' view testing of faith is an important component to maturing and growing in faith,** and therefore it should be welcomed, even though it may be difficult. He sees no contradiction in welcoming something that is difficult but that is for our growth in faith.

In the case of the gospel, **the Pharisees didn't have faith that they needed to grow in,** but rather they wanted faith produced, as it were, out of the blue. **They didn't want to be tested; they wanted to test God.** They put the shoe on the other foot. And Jesus is, well, actually disgusted it seems. Now you have to ask yourself, is the request of the Pharisees legitimate? That's the question that Mark really is raising. And the answer is of course it is not legitimate because what they are looking for is beside the point.

If we actually look at life, we must see the work of God; in fact **we must see the miraculous.** In the last century human beings have revealed very clearly what they are capable of: all the wars, all the battles, all the crimes, **all the violence,** multiplied by weapons of violence, and ultimately crowned with nuclear weapons. **This is what people are capable of.**

Now do you really think we are still living in this peaceful town through the influence of human nature? **Do you really think it's human nature that affords us any semblance of peace, or is it really a miracle?** When we think of our government and all the arguments and turbulence

in our government, isn't that a miracle that we are still in some sense together? Isn't it a miracle that Europe is getting along fairly well, even though for enormous lengths of time the European countries were always at each other's throats? It is a miracle that has brought about the change. This didn't happen from human nature; **this happened from something working in human nature, the power of grace, the power of God.** And if we just open our eyes, we can see this.

**So to demand a sign is really to ignore the sign that is obvious. It's really tempting God.** And as Jesus told the devil, "Thou shalt not tempt the Lord, thy God." So, yes, testing is important, but **it is we who need the testing, not God.** And if we really are serious and honest about **searching for the miraculous, we surely can find it.**