

# **Homily For Saturday of the 3rd Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1**

## **St Peter's 8:30am Mass - January 28, 2023**

(Memorial - St. Thomas Aquinas)

**Hebrews 11:1-2,8-19** "Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen."

**Canticle Luke 1:69-75** "The oath he swore to Abraham that we might serve him in holiness without fear"

**Mark 4:35-41** "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?"

### **Heroes In Faith**

#### **Introduction**

Perhaps you have heard the saying that " the only real sadness, the only real failure, the greatest tragedy in life, is to not become a saint." That is attributed to French novelist Leon Bloy. Whenever I am talking about individual saints, especially to children, it occurs to me that to make sure that we don't build up each saint so much that it makes their holiness unattainable, unreachable by the rest of us. But our very Catholic point in raising up each saint, celebrating their feast days, reading about their lives, is exactly to make them models of how, by the grace of God, every person not only can follow Jesus Christ in a saintly life, but that Jesus commands us to do so. This must become in every one of us the only thing we truly desire and long for and seek above every other thing we can imagine. This must become the greatest goal in this pilgrimage of life.

#### **St. Thomas Aquinas**

Having said that, I have to tell you that I have no idea how to make St. Thomas Aquinas into a saint that we can aspire to. In every way, he seems to manifest an unmatched grace filled life. He was recognized during his lifetime as a living saint. About St. Thomas, Pope St. John XXII said: "A man can derive more profit in a year from his books than from pondering one's whole life the teaching of others." Pope Pius XI added: "We now say to all who are desirous of the truth: Go to St. Thomas."

The 13th century was part of what the world calls 'the dark ages'. What a joke. All we have to do is hold up St. Francis of Assisi and St. Thomas Aquinas, both from that time, to see that God was shining a light so bright that we would only ignore it 800 years later at our peril. They carried the torch passed to them by our Lord himself.

Thomas not only devoured the teaching of his human mentors but also digested, altered, corrected, and improved them at times. It was his lifelong zeal as a student, along with the grace of God, that rewarded Thomas with the knowledge and wisdom that equipped him so well to teach others. He did this never to raise up his own status. He had unique powers of intellect and will, and explains how anyone can fathom and explain even the loftiest truths. His desire for a holy life of contemplation was evident from a young age. St. Thomas is known as the "Angelic Doctor" for his purity of mind and body, and remarkable intelligence. There are so many stories which illustrate his most important characteristic, which we are called to, which is his prayer life. So much great theology and philosophy had the foundation of hours every day spent with the Blessed Sacrament. Without going on more than there is time for, St. Thomas is on the short list for the greatest hero of our faith. He is in the 'hall of fame.'

## **Hebrews**

In today's passage from the Letter to the Hebrews, we hear about the Old Testament Hall of Fame in faith. Abraham is the original model of faith in God. We have the most famous definition of faith. It is "the assurance of things hoped for; the substance of things not seen." So faith bypasses our senses. We can't see with our senses what God has in store for us, but we can know it and live it in this life through Christ who is our all in all, and we can look forward to it as pilgrims do, who know that this place is not our true home.

The Christians listening to this letter were getting worn down. This epistle is to stir them up. Again in our time, we Christians are swimming against the tide of our culture and may have that same weariness. But we are called to persevere. Do not throw away the confidence you have in God's reward. We must ask for

patient endurance so that we will do the will of God. We must 'plug in' to God every day. We must let the heroes of our faith inspire us.

Abraham knew that the promise of God was to be fulfilled through Isaac. Therefore, his faith was even then in the power of God to raise someone from the dead. Sarah, at her age received the power to believe because she considered God faithful who had promised. She looks forward to Mary herself, who believed that God could do that exact same thing, even though she could not imagine how.

## **Mark**

Now we come to the Gospel, the Good News. It looked to the disciples in the boat, as it frequently looks to you and me, like Jesus is asleep in our boat. But then Jesus shows his divine authority over nature itself. All of God's children embark with Christ on a life that is full of dangerous storms, especially attacks from evil spirits and temptations of the flesh. We must learn to trust in Christ daily, since he alone can restrain these forces and bring us to the safe harbour of salvation.

Our Lord scolds his disciples: "Have you still no faith?" They had seen demonstrations of His divine power that proved beyond doubt that Jesus Christ was of God. Nevertheless, they did not realize that they should fear nothing because the Lord was with them. Jesus makes it clear that, if you have faith in him, you will also have courage.

If we, who are His modern day disciples, say we have faith, but then give way to fear, it is fitting that we should share the scolding that Jesus gave to his fearful disciples after He had stilled the storm on Galilee. Those same terrified disciples, who doubted even that Jesus cared about them, never mind there doubt that he could help, they became the heroic leaders of our faith, living for him and dying for him and for us. If they could do it, why not us?

## **Call To Conversion**

"No trial has come to you but what is human. God is faithful and will not let you be tried beyond your strength; but with the trial he will also provide a way out, so that you may be able to bear it." 1 Cor 10:12-13

Let us ask St. Thomas Aquinas to help us in our fears. St. Thomas Aquinas, pray for us.

**Entrance Antiphon:** *In the midst of the Church, he opened his mouth, and the Lord filled him with the spirit of wisdom and understanding, and clothed him in a robe of glory.*

**Collect:** *O God, who made Saint Thomas Aquinas outstanding in his zeal for holiness and his study of sacred doctrine, grant that we may understand what he taught and imitate what he accomplished.*

**Hebrews:** *Faith is the assurance of things hoped for, the conviction of things not seen. By faith, Abraham obeyed when he was called, and he set out, not knowing where he was going. He looked forward to the city that has foundations, whose architect and builder is God. By faith, Sarah received power to conceive, even when she was too old, because she considered God faithful who had promised. Therefore, descendants were born "as many as the stars of heaven. All of these died in faith seeing and greeting the promises from a distance. They desire a better country, a heavenly one. By faith Abraham offered up Isaac. he who had received the promises was ready to offer up his only son, of whom he had been told, "It is through Isaac that descendants shall be named for you." Abraham considered the fact that God is able even to raise someone from the dead.*

**Responsorial Cantic (Luke):** *The Lord has raised up a mighty saviour for us in the house of his servant David, as he spoke through the holy prophets of old. That we would be saved from our enemies and from the hand of all who hate us and has remembered his holy covenant. The oath that he swore to our ancestor Abraham that we might serve him without fear, in holiness and righteousness all our days.*

**Mark:** *All day long, Jesus had spoken to the crowd in parables. Leaving the crowd behind, they took him with them in the boat. A great windstorm arose, so that the boat was being swamped, but he was in the stern asleep. They woke him and said, "Teacher, do you not care that we are perishing?" Jesus woke and rebuked the wind, saying to the sea, "Peace! Be still!" The wind ceased and there was a dead calm. He said to them, "Why are you afraid? Have you still no faith?" They were filled with great awe and said to one another, "Who then is this, that even the wind and the sea obey him?"*