**27th Sunday Ordinary Time, Cycle. C. 2019.**

**John Milt**on knew early in life that he was destined to be a great poet. For this purpose, he lived a life of seclusion and subjected himself to rigorous self-discipline and diligent study. His “**Paradise Lost and Paradise Reg**ained” became the greatest epics in the English Literature. But he became blind when only 45. In his Sonnet “**On His Blind**ness” we find him **bold enough** to explain to God for depriving him of his eye-sight. We also find him **humble enoug**h to consider himself as an unworthy servant who has not done justice to the task entrusted to him. He has every reason to be happy and proud of his achievement and looks forward to a great reward in Heaven. But he expresses his fear of facing the judgment seat of God for wasting his poetic talent due to his premature blindness. What about us who don’t even give a serious thought to make use of our God-given talents for the spread of God’s Kingdom? **Do we feel we will be able to stand before God and expect to be praised**?

**Faith pro**vides us **goals and hop**es which reach far beyond our human abilities. We are called to achieve these things by working hard with all the gifts and talents God has entrusted to us. We are invited to cooperate actively with what God’s Spirit wants to accomplish in us and through us. Yet, it is not at all easy, and many are the times we are hounded by questions and doubts. **Prophet Habakk**uk voices our questions and doubts but God eventually brings back to the Centre: **The just person lives by faith".**

**St. Paul in the Second Reading**, reminds Timothy of the gifts of the Holy Spirit that he had received when he was ordained. So he must “**stir into flame**” or rekindle those gifts in the midst of all the difficulties and oppositions Timothy faced in Ephesus. Such things should never dampen his fervor, Paul says. The Holy Spirit given by God to each Christian, is a gift of courage that strengthens him/her to grow in faith. The Apostles too sensed the great difficulties Christian vocation entails. When they received the gigantic nature of their task, they cried out to the world, **“Lord, increase our faith**”. It was never easy to be a loyal follower of Christ. It will never be. Yet, those who follow him are on the right road. They have to fight the good fight and then be humble enough to say, “***We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our du***ty”.

***“How long shall I cry and you will not hear***?” is the anguished tormented cry of the **righteous A**bel. Centuries later the same cry was **echoed from the cross when Jesus**, the just man, burst out in an anguished sense of abandonment, “***My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?”.*** The cry of Abel, the psalmist and Jesus reverberates through the length and breadth of the Planet Earth. Life for the righteous never was and will never be easy. The righteous man has to have a firm faith. He has no other go, no other support.

**The life of St Edmund Campion is illustrative of t**his. He turned his back on a glorious career and joined the Catholic Church. This brought him exile. He became a priest and his love for his fellow Catholics brought him back to England where, in hiding, he ministered to the needs of his flock. But Edmund was not an ordinary Catholic priest, the soldiers of the Queen were after him. Finally betrayed, he was captured, imprisoned and tortured in the Tower of London. After a long trial, the chief justice pronounced the judgment: “***You must go to your cell and remain there until you shall be drawn through the open city of London upon hurdles to the place of execution, and there be hanged and let down alive, and your privy parts cut off, and your entrails taken out and burned in your sight; then your head will be cut off and body divided into four parts, to be disposed of at Her Majesty’s pleasure”.***

**After the trial Campion lay for eleven days in irons**. On the day of his execution he was dragged through the dirty streets of London to the place of his execution. Amid a jeering crowd and hostile officials, Campion mounted the cart which stood below the gallows and with the noose over his neck; he made his last confession: “: ***I am a Catholic man and a priest; in that faith have I lived and in that faith I intend to die.***”

**It has never been easy to be a Christ**ian. The early Christians had to deal with all sorts of threats and persecutions. So we can understand why this call to faith is at the heart of the Gospels. By asking Jesus for an increase, the disciples recognized that he is the source of this supernatural faith. It’s not the outcome of human strength or willpower but it is a sheer gift from God. It can never be seen as something we can boast of our own achievement. We are servants of the word, and when we respond to it we are simply doing our duty.

**We live in a world where it can be difficult to be faithful discipl**es. In such a world to be a faith-filled Christian is not simply about having an inner conviction, but the courage and strength to live that faith on a daily basis. Christ’s word today is word of encouragement that we need only a **little trust-th**e size of a mustard seed- in his strength to carry us through in this life. It is the **power of God living in and through us that will ultimately empower us to be faith-filled and faithful.**