

ENCOURAGEMENT ENCOURAGEMENT

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‘Commitment’

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We have just had the feast of the Holy Spirit, Pentecost, and dwell on the development of the Church after Jesus' Ascension to Heaven to return to His Father. When the 'Holy Dove' descended on the Apostles and Our Lady they were given extraordinary gifts and began to use them. They had already started to spread the Good News while Jesus was with them as He had instructed, but now they had additional grace and strength. They healed through that power, they endured torture, they had a new eloquence and spoke in Tongues. They travelled everywhere enduring long journeys, and this brought about a ever greater number of believers.

Those gifts, are those we receive, and that we receive in the sacrament of Confirmation (as well as through Baptism) They are those of Wisdom, Understanding and Council as well as Fortitude now thought of as Courage. There are limitless accounts of people from the time of the Apostles who continued to spread the Gospel, men and women, children, priests and lay people, who were prepared to sacrifice their whole lives even 'unto death' rather than give up what they knew was their calling and fundamental truth of the Gospel. They were sometimes learned people sometimes illiterate; most were very ordinary people who you would pass by in the street and pay no more attention to than to anyone else. Some have been Canonised and publicly recognised as Saints or recognised in some way, others remain silent heroes for whom their faith was the core of their being.

They came from many different parts of the world. Some places probably do not even warrant a dot on the Map. Others came from large cities and countries.

It would be hard to put them into any specific category or even to find some specific feature that unites them. They were, and are, people of faith yes, but more importantly people of *commitment*. That is their unique feature, and it is that that makes them stand out in the crowd when you look at their lives. It may not be obvious, heroism is often silent and not noisy, but they act in accordance with and to their first love once they discover what that is.

Many people today are nervous about making commitments to anything. The world view is seen as short term or changeable and any activity or choice is made without realising it, as a temporary thing and likely to be changed if circumstances alter or the fashion or fad in any culture has changed. This is true of commitments to marriage and family, work or even activities that may require much effort.

This sadly is also true of faith and belief. First fervour often wanes and is easily dropped when the demands of faith require demands of action and time.

When St. Teresa of Avila tried to reform her Carmelite order, many in the community who preferred a more easy lifestyle resisted her. They complained about her, and Teresa, in turn, complained to God about her tricky situation. The Lord famously responded to her in prayer, "That's how I treat my friends." In the good humour of a close friend she responded, "That's why you have so few of them' Yet she persisted in spite of rejection and humiliation. Her commitment resulted in a massive reform of the Carmelite order and she is a Doctor of the Church.

She also saw that in their Spiritual journey many wanted to advance spiritually and were happy to start the journey, even to go a little further until they found that it became more difficult and...

challenging, and more was required of them along the way. She regretted this deeply and tried to encourage others to take the harder path.

The key of course, is the purpose of the Commitment. If we are not certain of the end result or the purpose of the action it is obviously difficult to make a choice to continue regardless of difficulties and problems. In our faith journey we make a commitment to love God and love one another. It requires of us to love totally, or as the other St. Teresa of Kolkata often said 'till it hurts.' We are all weak human beings and that commitment is never going to be easy, especially as doubters, obstruction and culture make it all the more difficult. Our commitment is based not only on good ideas and even moral principles, but on the Love and trust we have in a person, that person being Jesus the Lord. We commit to live the way that He asked us out of love for us and longs for that commitment back.

On the 1st June 1958, during the communist era, in what is now Slovakia, formally Czechoslovakia, there was much poverty and privation. A little boy in a tiny village called Turzovka tried to survive after the death of both his parents. He knew only a little about faith, maybe just a few prayers. At a point of nearly starving, he was adopted by a kindly couple who were from a large town and better off.

That Family introduced him to prayer and he was Baptised and Confirmed. He stayed with them until his 18th birthday but was called up for military service by conscription. After this was concluded he returned to his little village and married and tried to eke out a living by being a forester. It was hard work and he was often hungry but was able to provide enough for his family. He tried to stay with the little he knew of faith and essentially the basics. But he made a commitment to Sunday Mass. A time came when he was promoted to chief Forrester and he had to forgo his Mass. There was no leeway during communist rule.

On one occasion he was very distraught about this and knelt down in front of a tiny Icon pinned to a tree (which he had never noticed before) and

he prayed with great regret. Quite suddenly a blinding light enveloped him, and a Beautiful Woman appeared to Him bathed in light. This he recognised was the Virgin Mary. What followed then was a whole teaching, some parts as a 'warning' for our time and others as teaching for him specifically. He was told to repair the broken fence in front of him which he did without thinking, which were revealed as the three planks Penance, Rosary and Prayer for priests. He was shown much of the future events which were to befall mankind if the world did not change which frightened him greatly but at the end of the vision, a 'fire' fell on him, and he was knocked to the ground and became unconscious. After many hours he got up but was a changed man. At first, he was not believed but then the villagers rallied round him.

The authorities determined to stop all this talk of apparitions and arrested him. To say 'arrested' is an understatement as he was many times, and returned home after extensive torture, and psychiatric drugs given to distort his reality. The returning of him was to break him completely as he would live in fear. But, they failed, and he refused to deny what he had experienced and how he had changed. Finally, as an old man very ill and broken they took him home laughing, saying 'till the next time'. He replied. 'You will never break me as I believe and made a commitment'. This apparition received a Nihil Obstat ('approved') and while little known, attracts many to Slovenia. His name is Machus Lasut, an ordinary extraordinary man. Real commitment does not permit us to waver and is steadfast and courageous. At this time, we all need to have it and use it.

Halina Holman ©



Feast Days in June

1st St. Justin

3rd St. Charles Lwanga & Companions

5th St. Boniface

7th The Body and Blood of Christ (Sunday)

8th St. William of York, 9th St. Columba

11th St. Barnabas, Apostle

12th The Sacred Heart of Jesus

13th St. Anthony of Padua

14th Eleventh Sunday of Ordinary Time

20th St. Alban, First Martyr of England

21st Twelfth Sunday of Ordinary Time

22nd Sts. John Fisher & Thomas More

23rd St. Etheldreda

24th The Nativity of St. John the Baptist

28th Sts. Peter & Paul, Apostles (Sunday)

