

The Hubble of the spiritual world

Imagine you give your son a hundred-dollar telescope for his ninth birthday. A week later he says to you: 'I saw this star at this position. NASA says that the Hubble telescope can detect a cluster of galaxies there. But why would I trust them? I only trust what I can see. To me, it's a star!' You would explain to him: 'Son, when someone has a better telescope than yours, you'd better trust... When someone sees farther and better than you, you should trust.' That's exactly what faith is about.

Faith is trusting someone...

Not wishful thinking

Not proved knowledge

Faith is seeing through the eyes of Someone who is wiser than us.

That is actually very Good News for two reasons:

A. The common understanding is that faith is some blind leap into the abyss. Like the Indiana Jones movie, when he steps forward and there is a bridge that was impossible to see at first glance, so he thought he was walking into the abyss. No, that is not faith. Faith is finally relying on intelligence, on reason, on vision. Not on my vision though, but on God's vision. There is Someone who actually sees. God has the Hubble in the spiritual world. We can trust His wisdom.

B. The act of faith has a profound human meaning: it is trusting someone in a life and death matter... In an issue on which our life and our suffering, our happiness, our eternal destiny depend, we are entrusting ourselves to someone. And such an act of trust in someone is deeply human, necessary for us to be human. To the point of saying: if I cannot trust in someone that way, I am incomplete.

I once went as a speaker to an evangelical school and the principal was a bit concerned about this... A Catholic priest talking to all the students... Would I preach against their faith? What would parents say? I finally said to him on the meeting we had prior to my talk: "It is true that I don't agree 100% with your view of Christianity, but I also realize that at this age students are guided in their faith and their conscience by trust: they trust their parents and teachers. I am not going to damage that trust, because that would be destructive. That trust is God's providential way of guiding them at this time of their lives, and I am not going to act against it. If the Lord wills to guide them elsewhere in the future, the Holy Spirit has many ways to do that."

Faith, then, is trusting someone that sees, that knows, i.e. God, and trusting God in a matter that is essential to me. It is almost as entrusting my life into His hands. Faith has to be consistent with this. When you trust God, that extends to everything He has said and done, to His revelation, His guiding my life, everything.

Let me suggest three applications that follow from this:

1. Take all of it – because I trust you Lord. St. Thomas Aquinas asks in a passage: Is faith still true faith if one denies one article of the Creed? His answer is: No, it is no longer authentic faith, because it doesn't have the right rationale any longer. If my faith is the supermarket type of faith: I go around the aisles of Christian Doctrine and put into my cart the ones I prefer, then that faith is based on my reasoning and election, not on God. In that case, it is my judgment that I am trusting, not God's. Therefore, it is an unstable faith, a faith prone to stumble against anything I fail to understand, that I find hard to accept, or when I am going through difficult times... I once had a conversation with a young lawyer, who said to me: 'I believe in Christ, but to believe in the Church is too much...' - 'But in doubting that aspect – I replied - you are undermining your faith in Christ!' - 'What do you mean?', he asked - 'That you have known Christ, the Gospel, the mystery of God, through the Church... if the Church is not trustworthy, but basically false, how can you trust in Christ, whom you have known through the Church and through a Bible that the Church has written and recognized as inspired?'

2. Difficulties don't make one doubt. We may find a doctrine difficult to explain or imagine, but this difficulty is an apparent one. If God knows better, even what is hard for us to understand is easy for Him to fulfill.

Imagine what St. Peter and the apostles may have thought when they heard the words of Jesus that day. They couldn't possibly imagine how Jesus could give us his body and blood. It seemed crazy, impossible. And for us now, it is so simple! It is almost obvious: we come to Mass on Sunday and receive the flesh of the Son of Man. It requires faith, certainly, but it is not a crazy or impossible thing.

Now, how many times this difficulty is an obstacle for our faith, especially about future things! How will heaven be? How will the resurrection take place? How will judgment take place? How can God be merciful and just at the same time? I can't imagine it. How can God be eternal, how can He know the future? How can he listen to so many prayers? Don't try to imagine it. Our imagination is limited. God is all-powerful, perfect. He will do those things so easily that we'll be surprised. Just as He fulfilled the promises in John 6 such a simple and marvelous way.

3. Our faith can take the Nike Challenge: Just do it. Act in a way that is consistent with your faith. Ask yourself: What would I do if I had an iron-faith? 'I would pray more'. Well, just do it. 'I wouldn't miss Mass'. OK. 'I would forgive my in-laws'. OK. 'I think I would even re-evaluate my whole life'. Great! Just do it. And you'll see your faith grow from that. 'But I don't have that faith!' Act as if... and you'll have it. It's the Nike challenge.

Summing up:

1. Take all of it – because I trust you Lord.
2. Difficulties don't make one doubt. God understands what we can't.
3. Nike faith: Just do it.

Sometimes we may feel that way: Lord, this is hard to accept, because I don't understand, or it is hard for me to live up to it... But then, to whom shall I go? You know better Lord, you have the Hubble telescope. You see far where I cannot really see. That's why I trust you. You have the words of eternal life.