

Homily for the 4th Sunday of Lent

In our Gospel today, taken from the 3rd chapter of John, the word “believe” is used 5 times. Now that might not seem very remarkable to you; but to put it in perspective, the word “of” is only used 3 times in the course of this 8-verse discussion between Jesus and Nicodemus, the Pharisee! So, do you think Jesus might be trying to tell Nicodemus that belief has to be a MAJOR part of the lives of those who would be His disciples? Yes, of course! And to emphasize this importance of belief, John goes on to write a verse that has become very well-known in our times. He says, “For God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who **believes** in him might not perish but might have eternal life.” Lo and behold, there’s that word “believe” again.

But, what does it really mean to believe in something? Well, maybe it means acknowledging that something is true. Like gravity. We all believe that “what goes up must come down”. It’s more an intellectual thing. But, from a faith perspective, at least the one Jesus Himself is coming from, belief is more than just accepting as true something we cannot see. In other words, in God’s economy, seeing is not believing. Actually, first we must believe, and then we get to see. Take, for example, our relationship with God. No one sees God the Father on this earth, and yet we believe in Him. And because we believe in Him, one day we shall see Him face to face in eternal life. Otherwise, if we could see Him now, then that’s not faith or belief – it’s seeing!

In the Gospel passage today, the word translated five times as “believe” is actually a Greek word, which carries with it the added notion of obedience as well. This means that belief is not fully belief unless there is *obedience* to the God who is being believed in! In other words, to really possess the type of belief in Jesus that leads to eternal life means bringing out lives into agreement with Jesus that we live like Him. He is the Way to eternal life! Belief must lead to action.

At the end of the day, we can say we believe in God all we want. But that belief should be evident in the way we seek to live out our lives. Not that we have already been perfected, because we haven't. But are we seriously making the effort to progress along with Way, which is Jesus Christ? And this is why we each need Lent, because we're not perfect, and we all have things to work on, and we continually need God's forgiveness. So, as we continue our celebration of this Eucharist today, and welcome the Savior into our midst, we profess our belief in Him, and ask for the grace to live that belief out this week. God bless you.