

December Reflection

Growing in Faith – “I remind you to fan into flame the gift of God, which is in you through the laying on of my hands” – 2 Timothy

I remember the first Mass I went to at university quite vividly. Particularly the homily from the chaplain. He began with a quote from Pope St John Paul II ‘What have you done with your baptism?’ This question struck me at a very poignant moment in life. I had completed my first week living away from home – I’d survived, and started feeling like an actual adult. It occurred to me that I was now living my faith under my own steam, I was no longer in the safety net of my family home. It was now more effort to pray, to go to Mass and to live out my faith; it would be so easy at this point to stop one or all three of those things but through the great formation of my family and parish I felt that I did want to carry on.

I had been given this wonderful gift in Baptism and now I really wanted to not let it go to waste. I didn’t want to waste, ignore or forget my baptism. Over the three years I did more than just keep practising my faith, coasting along, I wanted to go deeper, to know more, to grow in my relationship with Christ. For many of us cradle Catholics it can be easy to vicariously live the faith of our parents, grandparents, spouse or maybe even children. The thing is God has no grandchildren, he only has children. There comes a time when we have to accept the offer of being his heir, being his child, when we become adults we are called to claim the identity that was given to us at baptism.

The real difficult point is that we can’t do this just once, we don’t just make the choice one day and then that’s it, we then do what we want. Everyday, sometimes multiple times a day we have to be converted again, and again, and again. In this letter St Paul is writing to his protégé St Timothy. In the previous verse he reminds Timothy that his faith was handed on and nurtured by his mother and grandmother

but now through the laying on of hands (ordination), he has been given a new gift of the Holy Spirit. In our Baptism and Confirmation we too have been given the Holy Spirit through the laying on of hands. He will never leave us. He will also always respect and accept our choices, he won’t force himself into our lives. He is like a pilot light in a boiler – always there keeping things ticking over, however a boiler is not just there for being the host of a pilot light. Its purpose is to provide great heat. We are called to fan into a flame the presence of the Holy Spirit in our life, to fan into a flame our faith.

In our final month of the Year of Prayer we are focusing on growing in faith. I hope this year has provided opportunities for you to develop your prayer life, to encounter Christ anew, and just because the year is ending it doesn’t mean this should stop! These themed years can be very important, helpful and encouraging but if they do not cause a change in us they can be a waste of time. Consider how you are going to fan into a flame the gift of God. A good routine can be one of the best ways to do this:

- What will your daily prayer life look like?
- What can you add to this on a weekly basis (Sunday Mass, Parish Prayer Group, Weekday Mass, Adoration)?
- What can you add monthly (Confession, extended times of prayer, praying with others)?
- And what will you enshrine into your yearly routine: retreats, pilgrimages, days of recollection?

Let the legacy of the Year of Prayer be a Life of Prayer.

Holy Spirit, working with me today, and help me work more closely with you.

Written by **Joe Hopkins**

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