



23 February 2019, 7 p.m. | 7<sup>th</sup> Sunday Year C  
ACC Chapel 75<sup>th</sup> Anniversary

1 Samuel 26:2, 7-9, 12-13, 22-23 | Psalm 103:1-2, 3-4, 8, 10, 12-13 | 1 Corinthians 15:45-49 | Luke 6:27-38

## LIVING OUR CHRISTIAN FAITH

### *Introduction*

My dear sisters and brothers, we are gathered on this happy occasion of the 75<sup>th</sup> anniversary of this chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, known as the ACC Chapel. This little chapel was the beginning of our parish of St. Pius the Tenth, and so this place is not an outpost but the place of initiation of our parish.

At this thanksgiving Eucharist, we pray for all the people who were instrumental in setting up and maintaining this beautiful chapel over the years, and also for all the families living around this place and who come here for Mass every week.

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### *Homily*

My dear sisters and brothers, I remember when I was working in the formation centre in Bangalore, we had various types of seminars and meetings. One of the topics during a course of seminars was on the word of God as understood by different religions. People from different religions presented to the group their understanding of the word of God. One person who followed some of the religious traditions of our country presented many beautiful ideas. After his talk, I had a little chat with him about the ideas he spoke about – how to be good, how to relate to God, how to relate to other people, etc. I mentioned to him that there was much philosophy and theoretical ideas about life, religion and the world in his presentation, but there were no concrete examples. He explained that in their religious books, there are not many real life stories, but mythical tales that are written to illustrate the points being expressed and taught.

When we look at the Bible, we see that it is not about myths and fables, but contains true life stories. Some might argue that our scriptures too have many ideas and not enough real life incidents. The gospel that we heard today gives many ideas. The Church has chosen these two texts very aptly. The First Reading is taken from the Old Testament, and speaks about two kings from the past. These were historical people. If we look at the historical events that took place before the coming of Jesus, we see that one of these kings, Saul, reigned between the years 1030 and 1010. The other king, David, reigned between the years 1010 and 970.

This story about them is very beautiful. There is a conflict between Saul and David, who were almost like father and son. David finds Saul fast asleep in a cave with his spear and a jug of water beside him. David goes into the cave with his servant, and they could have attacked and killed Saul. But he does not harm him. Instead, he picks up the spear and goes to the neighbouring mountain, from where he calls out to Saul and says: I found you helpless and unguarded, and I could have killed you, but I did not do it. As a sign that what I say is true, I have your spear. Send your man to collect it'. That little incident changed Saul's heart, and he asked for forgiveness and reconciled with David. A beautiful, real life story of enemies who forgive.

Then we have the gospel, where Jesus gives us many ideas, and behind each of those teachings, we also see in the New Testament, incidents in the life and time of Jesus, wherein he himself lived his teachings. For instance, as he hung on the cross, his prayer to the Father was, 'Father, forgive them, for they know not what they do'. So Jesus himself lived these teachings and he taught his disciples to live them too. If there was a conflict, he would teach them in the midst of that situation.

This is very specific to Christianity. It is not theory, but real life stories, which means that God is telling us that these principles are not lofty ideals, but values that we can live by even though it may be difficult. Jesus himself might have found it difficult, and so he built up these attitudes. One of the teachings in today's gospel is that if somebody strikes you on one cheek, turn the other cheek as well. Did Jesus do it? No. When the soldier struck him during his trial, he asked him, 'What wrong have I done? Why did you strike me?'. He did not turn the other cheek, but he taught people not to be revengeful. He taught us to forgive even when it is difficult.

Yes, dear sisters and brothers, the gospel gives us very challenging and difficult teachings, and I think it is beautifully connected to today's celebration. This chapel is dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour. The word 'succour' means 'help'. Mary gives us perpetual help to live our Christianity. And so, when the teachings of Jesus become difficult to obey, then we can turn to Mary and pray for help.

Sometimes our enemies could be in our very homes. Our own family members can make life very difficult for us and we may feel like being vengeful. That is when we remember the words of Jesus: Love your enemies. Jesus will give us the strength to forgive and reconcile. Mary, Mother of Perpetual Help, is also there to give us help in difficult circumstances. And so, we who are part of this chapel dedicated to Our Lady of Perpetual Succour, can go to her in times of challenge and trouble, and she will give us the strength and help we need in order to live our faith.

Our faith is not merely about ideas. Our faith must be lived by us every day, so that the world around will see from our example how to live in love and forgiveness. St. Augustine, in his teachings, said that if we want to go to God, we need to fly to him, and for this, we need two wings – one of forgiveness and the other, of giving. To forgive and to give generously to others are the two wings that can take us closer to God. And so, if we feel we are drifting away from God, we may realise that perhaps we are missing one of our wings – we need both of them. To give and to forgive are the two wings that will take us to God and also to each other, Amen.

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### *The Lord's Prayer*

Let us pray to our Heavenly Father in a prayer where Jesus asks us to forgive others as he forgives us. We pray: Our Father...



Fr Cleophas Fernandes  
*Parish Priest, St. Pius X Church*