

**08/07/16 ..... 19 C**

-- In less than a month, Mother Teresa will be canonized a saint. I have something about that event in my bulletin column and you can read about it there. But this is a story about her told by another priest (now deceased) who spent a month working at her home for the dying in Calcutta.

-- He was there because he was seeking some answers, some clarity in his life. So he asked Mother Teresa, *Pray that I might have clarity*. She abruptly answered, *No*. When he asked her why, she said, *Clarity is the last thing you are clinging to and you have to let go of*.

-- This priest thought Mother Teresa had clarity but, as the book her spiritual director wrote after she died indicated, that wasn't at all the case. But she did have trust in God.

-- And so she told the priest she would pray that he might have trust. That is what faith is all about.

-- Our second reading speaks about the faith of Abraham and his family. He did not have clarity; he only had God's promises. But he trusted in God to come through. In his own lifetime, he only saw a partial fulfillment of God's promises, but they were all fulfilled in good time.

-- True faith is not some absolute certainty about how the future is going to work out. It doesn't mean the ability to predict future world events, or even how your own life will work out.

-- Authentic faith reflects the attitude Jesus expressed on the cross when he said, *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*. Too often we think Jesus was able to suffer on that cross because he had some special beatific vision that all would turn out well.

-- Of course, he had the Father's strength, but he still had to deal with real human doubts, even in those last hours of his life. All of the patriarchs and prophets from Abraham on down had similar doubts to overcome.

-- And so have the followers of Jesus through the centuries, right down to people like Mother Teresa. She went through years when God seemed distant, when she seemed like she was just going through the motions in all the “good work” she was doing.

-- Her faith was shown through her perseverance in prayer during all this. And this reminds us that we need to hang in there during times when God seems distant to us.

-- We will never have complete clarity in this life. The gospel reminds us of this fact when it tells the story of the thief in the night. God could call us from this life at any moment in time.

-- So we have to nourish an attitude of faith right now. We should develop habits of regular prayer (if we haven't yet done so) and stick to those habits if we have developed them, even in difficulties.

-- I know there are times when I would like more clarity about the future of my life. But that may well not be what God wants for me. God often challenges me to put my trust in him, especially when things around me are uncertain.

-- And I suspect that is true for most if not all of us. It might seem nice to have a life strategy all worked out which is executed according to plan. But life is rarely like that. God calls us to persevere in faith even when we have little or no idea of what is coming down the pike.

-- May each of us repeat that prayer of Jesus on the cross, *Father, into your hands I commend my spirit*. And may we live our lives as people who really mean that.