

Twenty Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

My beloved brothers and sisters, Angelo Roncalli, was the 4th of fourteen children born into a family of sharecroppers in a village of Lombardy, in Italy. His family was very poor, and yet, his desire to serve God as a priest, came from this family that was so profoundly full of faith. He became a priest in 1904, and eventually, was ordained a Bishop. He served in very, very difficult circumstances in WWI and in Bulgaria, Greece, Turkey, putting his life in constant jeopardy by hiding Jews, even in his own quarters. Eventually became Pope John XXIII at the age of 76. His motto was: In Obedientia et Pax. He was known as a man of incredible joy and love, filled with incredible energy in the service of the Church and the world. We now call him Pope St. John the XXIII.

My beloved brothers and sisters, often, as the Pastor, I am sent requests from other parishes requesting testimony that someone is a practicing Catholic, because they have been asked to be the Sponsor at a Baptism or Confirmation. I cannot testify to something that I do not know! Sometimes, it is simply because I cannot put a name to a face, in which case, I will ask the person to come by the office, so that I can affirm that they are coming to Mass and are regularly involved in the practice of their faith. However, the same thing is true for all of us; the question is this: "What do people witness from my life?" Do they see that I am a dedicated Catholic, whose life is effervescent with the Life of Jesus, serving my brothers and sisters, both in the parish and in the community, with love and joy?

If we think about it often there is a contradiction today between what people say they believe and how they live; and instinctively, we know that this is not a good thing! It is like the second son in today's parable. He told his father that he would go out to work in the vineyard; but underneath, he was living for his own self-centered gratification, and not for the good of the family! On the other hand, the first son, although at first disobedient to his father, obviously had a conversion of heart and mind, and obediently went out into the vineyard for the good of the family.

My beloved brothers and sisters, there are many, many people who claim to be Catholics, but who do not practice their faith, or live in outright contradiction to

the faith, by what they say and do. When we live in this contradiction of faith and values, we create a storm of turmoil and fail to experience the deep interior peace, wisdom and Christian joy that Jesus means for each of us! Faith is real, it makes a real impact on our lives and our world!

I just read an article, which showed that throughout these terrible storms that have torn apart the lives of so many people in Texas and Florida, and now, in the Caribbean, the majority of people who have come to the rescue of total strangers with assistance, housing, food, and direct rescue services, have been people of faith, coming from faithful communities and churches! People of faith who practice their faith, are people of joy, love and service- they're not perfect people, but their lives of faith are visible to others. Let us ask ourselves today: is my faith a living faith, growing in love and service? Am I a source of light shining in a very dark world?