

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday (C)

6<sup>th</sup> October 2019

‘Not timidity, but power and love and self control.’

Hab 1–2: *Am I to cry for help while you will not listen?  
your hearts*

Ps 94: *Harden not*

2Tim 1: *fan into a flame the gift that God gave you ...*

Lk 17: 5–10: *The apostles said to the Lord: “Increase our faith.”*

This month seems to be full of so many things drawing our attention this way and the other, in connection with the Church. Already last week in our Archbishop’s letter to us, Cardinal Vincent he drew our attention to: (i) the ‘Extraordinary month of Mission’ this month of October; (ii) the Canonization of the first English saint for 40 years, Cardinal Newman, next Sunday; and (iii) the ‘Year of the Word’ (‘The God Who Speaks’) running from this month until December next year. Well, we could add to that, of course: (i) the CaFOD collection from our Harvest Fast Day just gone, in which we support the development/aid work carried out in our name; (ii) the fact that October is always the month of the Holy Rosary, a powerful prayer invoking the intercession of Our Lady; and (iii) the creation of new cardinals this weekend by Pope Francis, adding 13 cardinals from across the vast Catholic world including from Cuba and from the Democratic Republic of the Congo. And then,

as I drew attention to a couple of weeks ago, and provided prayer cards for, last weekend, the desperate need for prayer for our country for God’s Holy Spirit to bring about in our hearts a time of peace and political settlement after such a time of rancour and strife.

Well, how to bring all these thoughts and competing concerns together? Well, for one thing, I feel, it just proves that the life of the spirit — the religious and moral dimension of what it means to be human — is powerful, important, and central to the world. As we think and reflect on these many concerns for just this month, we see that to be a faithful Catholic, to be a person whose life is built on Jesus Christ, is both relevant personally and involves a vast proportion of humanity. And we, here in this one parish, are caught up into that huge throng of God’s holy Church, as we each pray, worship, offer Mass, reach out in love and service to our neighbour.

What does St Paul say to us this Sunday, as he writes again to his companion and missionary colleague, St Timothy? He is, as always, offering a vibrant and

encouraging message: *“I remind you to rekindle the gift of God that is within you through the laying on of my hands; for God did not give us a spirit of timidity but a spirit of power and love and self-control.”* ... not a spirit of ‘timidity,’ but a spirit of ‘power’ and ‘love’ and ‘self-control.’ I love these words from St Paul, as he mentors this young protégé who was bishop of the community at Ephesus. We are not called in our Catholic life to be timid in our faith, but to live it fully, robustly, kindly, daily ... with “power and love and self-control.”

So, it is right and fitting that our faith in the Lord Jesus should reach into each and every part of our lives; it’s right that it should be dominating our month of October, just as it should dominate each month of our lives. Please, don’t ever put your faith on the back-burner just to simmer! Be delighted, be thankful, if your faith is a part of your every day and not just of a short bit of every Sunday; and if it’s *not* (yet) a part of your every day, and crucial to your very way of thinking, then decide and plan out how it is going to be! Let Christ dominate who you are, because that

domination is not a subjugation or a diminishing of who we are — it is just the opposite: we come to life in Christ, and are far, far greater human beings if we let the Spirit get to work properly in our lives.

To all these October activities — from our collection for CaFOD today; to our fervent prayer for Government leaders and country; to our delight in cardinals from across the world to bolster the universal mission of Christ; to our joy for a new saint drawn from our countrymen; to our connection with the Scripture that we intend to promote in the next year — let us give a heartfelt ‘yes’! Let us allow the Church to guide us unfailingly into a deeper love for God, expressing it not in “timidity,” but in “power” (properly understood, i.e. in “love and self control”). We are not on the back foot! Faith is necessary to make sense of humanity and each human life. God has made us, and in all the dimensions of our life as individuals and as a society, and as a human race, He alone can satisfy us. *“You have been trusted to look after something precious; guard it with the help of the Holy Spirit who lives in us.”*