

Many of you know my predecessor, Fr. Karl, was an avid cook *and* a bit of a health nut. He left lots of food that I've used, but in equal parts that I've tossed. It seems like behind every normal ingredient in the cupboard I find some kind of superfood, stating something like: "This previously indigestible part of the octopus egg sack has been refined to obtain its richest protein potency for increased brain functioning" – *sounds delicious!* The fear of sickness and death can make us desperate to try anything.

But swinging the bat in desperation hoping to hit something that works is different than faith. "Faith is the realization of what is hoped for and evidence of things not seen," says the Letter to the Hebrews (11:1). Evidence of things *not* seen?! How can you have evidence without visible facts? Well, the author means that without yet seeing the goal we start to experience the effects of life forever with God by acting on faith. Why? Not because we believe in magic or karma, but instead we trust the person of Christ who died and rose. Faith and sacraments are a relationship.

Thus, the story of the Woman with Hemorrhages shows the difference between desperation and faith. Here is a woman who's suffered twelve years, and not just in pain but her illness meant she was cut off from society. Then here comes Jesus: gaining quite a reputation as a miracle worker and perhaps, some say, as the Messiah. As a good Jew she would've known her condition made her unclean. The Law of Moses said, for example, that women were impure for a week after childbirth or at the end of the menstrual cycle, and so was any man who touched her. (People didn't understand scientific causes for illness, but they intuited some foods and conditions killed. And if something approximated those things, they ended up in the purity laws too. Yet, the purity rules didn't just give the Israelites health but they gave them an identity – they

made them a distinct People of God.) If one were unclean, he had to go the Temple in Jerusalem for purification, the dwelling of God on earth, and the source of life or its restoration.

This woman should've known that by touching Jesus she rendered Him unclean. So why'd she do it? How could she be so selfish? The woman sensed Christ was the New Temple – the new dwelling of God among man, where we will worship in spirit in truth. He makes a people – His Church – not by ritual purity but by coming to Him. In other words, when she should've made him unclean, Christ instead makes her clean. It's a reversal of the Law's prediction. The Woman with Hemorrhages reaches out in faith to be healed. She acts in a way that our faith should compel us, which is this: **to act boldly in humility**.

It sounds like a contradiction of terms to say we should act *boldly in humility*. Boldness sounds like President Trump (someone not known for his humility!). We might think holy people are shrinking violets. The opposite is true. [St. Mother Teresa of Calcutta was a cute, shriveled humanitarian guest of President Clinton, until she scolded him for allowing abortion under the aegis of women's rights. St. Padre Pio spent hours in the confessional tending poor sinners. But when a doctor dismissed his stigmata as the product of meditating on the Crucifixion he replied, "Oh yeah? Why don't you go meditate on a bull and see if you sprout horns!"] No, the saints aren't wimps, but they know when to be bold and when to beg.

We act boldly in humility. How do we take opportunities with Christ? Be bold in faith yet humble in your own powers. Seize the opportunity! Recall the Parable of the Talents in which Jesus describes a king who gives three servants ten, five, and one

hundred pounds of gold to invest. The first two servants double their money but the third buried his one in the ground out of fear of risk. The king calls the servant with one talent *wicked and lazy*, gives his talent to the one with ten, and throws him out, saying, “To the one who has more will be given him, and he will grow rich. But to the one who has not, even what he has will be taken away” (Mt. 25:29). If your faith isn’t moving forward boldly, admitting your poverty before God’s wealth, then it’s only moving backwards.

The other day I was making a pastoral visit to Albany hospital and I met a gentlemen on my way in who was not Catholic but certainly interested in meeting a monk. And before we parted he told me that he’d been kicked out of his church. He was a helicopter gunner in the Vietnam War and the minister told him he couldn’t be forgiven because he’d killed noncombatants. I don’t usually have much of a poker face and I’m sure I looked somewhere between disbelief and disgust. I said to him: “There is no sin for which you cannot be forgiven, so long as you are repentant,” and of course, resolve to amend your life. Poor man. How many years had he been shunned from so-called Christians and thinking himself doomed to hell? It’s been over forty years since the Fall of Saigon. I could see the relief in his expression and then I said, “Find the *right* Church.”

Brothers and sisters, do we have faith that makes us **bold in humility**, or a faith that lets our encounter with Jesus pass by? What unrepented sins have we left on our souls due to pride, laziness, or simply thinking forgiveness impossible so that we pass up the opportunity to go to confession? Y’know, I’ve been here five Saturdays now; that means five afternoons in the confessional. But it’s really amazing: *no one in the parish sins!* (Ha,ha) **Be bold in humility...** Do we hold a grudge against someone sitting in this very church right now? That mars the Mystical Body! We can make the ritual gesture of

the Sign of Peace what it's meant to be. It's not, "Hey, I haven't seen you in a week! How're doin'?" or to your spouse, "Lay some sugar on me, baby." No! It's a *ritual gesture* for extending forgiveness to neighbor, turning over hatred, and letting Christ's peace bring about a communion in the communion we then share. **Be bold in humility...**

In drought conditions as we nervously keep our heads down with fortitude just trying to get through it, can we accept a greater calling to hope? Fortitude is the human virtue of discipline mixed with courage, but true *hope* is a theological virtue – God's gift that helps us rise above the evidence seen to trust that in God's time these real life struggles are as nothing compared to the glory of this world giving way to the next. **Be bold in humility...** May our Eucharist increase our faith to reach out for Christ and to trust that His Lordship even over death will astound the world in the abundant life He brings.