

St Peter's Henleaze Trinity 12 proper 15 0800 & 0945 Isaiah 5^{v 1-7} Judgement (Vineyard analogy) Hebrews 11^{v 29} - 12^{v 2} By Faith . . --> primacy of Jesus, Luke 12^{v 49-56} Divisions 'cos of Christ!

"They say" *You are what you believe.* **"they also say"** *If it doesn't matter what you believe: what you believe doesn't matter!*
Ron Boatwright

Today's epistle emphasis the power and relevance of faith. Faith can make the impossible possible.

A story about one of the saints commemorated this week - Maximilian Kolbe. In May 1941 he was transferred to Auschwitz. In the camp, the heavy work of moving loads of heavy logs at double speed was enforced by kicks and lashes. Maximilian also had to remove the bodies of those who died of torture. At the same time, he continued his priestly ministry, hearing confessions in unlikely places and smuggling in bread and wine to celebrate the Eucharist. He was noted for his sympathy and compassion towards those even more unfortunate than himself.

In July 1941 a prisoner from Kolbe's barracks vanished, prompting the deputy camp commander to pick 10 men from the same barracks to be starved to death in the notorious Block 13 as punishment for his escape. One of those selected, Franciszek Gajowniczek, cried out in distress at having been chosen, Maximilian volunteered to take his place. He stepped forward, saying: "I am a Catholic priest. I wish to die for that man. I am old; he has a wife and children." During the days in the death chamber of Cell 18, he led his companions in songs and prayer. After three weeks of dehydration and starvation, only Kolbe and three others were still alive. He was finally put to death on 14 August 1941 with an injection of carbolic acid.

Franciszek Gajowniczek died in 1995, at Brzeg in Poland, 95 years old – and 53 years after Kolbe had saved him. But he was never to forget the ragged monk. After his release from Auschwitz, Gajowniczek spent the next five decades paying homage to Father Kolbe, honoring the man who died on his behalf.

For example in December 1994, the 94-year-old Pole visited St. Maximilian Kolbe Catholic Church of Houston. His translator on that trip, Chaplain Thaddeus Horbowy, said: "He told me that as long as he . . . has breath in his lungs, he would consider it his duty to tell people about the heroic act of love by Maximilian Kolbe." a latter day addition to the letter to the Hebrews?

But the key to it is - that it does matter what we believe! Jesus is the one true focus, *the pioneer and perfecter of our faith*. There are saints and martyrs galore, and their faith is an ever growing encouragement to us to dare to be **the people of faith**. But He (Jesus) was God made visible and He showed us the real life that is God. Not the vengeful, angry . . . etc image that we like to construct more in our image than the other way around, that we are in his image. We have the potential to rise above the mundane and muddy world that trashes so much, that condemns so many to a life less human, that makes compromises out of what we think necessary for our best interest, not that of others. This begs the question - so what difference does our faith make in our daily lives?

The Gospel is an encouragement to stand firm in what we believe and not to accept shabby compromises. Yes it may lead to temporary distress between one another, but the alternative is always going to be a cheap and tatty way, not to glory, but to a life less glorious.