

There is a clever ad on television in which a young twenty something, still living at home, is frustrating his parents with his seeming lack of initiative to find a job. The image at the dinner table is one of discomfort and an awkward silence. Finally, his phone vibrates, and the father grabs it, somewhat in disgust that it is even at the table. As it turns out, the notification signals that several job interviews are all lined up and scheduled. In short, it is a clash of worlds.

For those of us in the "over-50" crowd, it is difficult to assimilate and to adjust to many of the changes brought about by technology and in society in general. Many feel as though they are playing catch-up and doing so constantly. Where are the constants in life? Do they even exist, or is simply everything changing? The same principle holds true with respect to the faith. That which is familiar is comforting; when that rug appears to be pulled from under our feet, we immediately become nervous.

The current situation in the Church has many people asking questions, and frankly, answers do not always appear to be clear or in some cases even forthcoming. This adds to the sense of unease and it leaves many Catholics feeling quite unsure of their faith.

"Remain faithful to what you have learned and believed..." These words form our second reading come at a very critical time in our life of faith in the Church today. Rather than feel powerless, embrace that which you know to be true., what you have seen, read and learned. Though there are necessarily changeable elements in the Catholic life of faith, there remain constants, key doctrines which cannot fundamentally change.

If we have spent ourselves for good, for the sake of others, and in response to the calling we have received, we may *turn out the light* at night with a clear conscience and know that we are right with God.

We discover that God gives us the grace we need to persevere, and just when we think we have had it, He sends someone to lift up our weary arms, so that we do not have to bear the load all by ourselves.

Moses grew spiritually weary, thinking that he needed to bear the load alone. Any of us could feel the same, unless our life is centered on Christ. Jesus taught that we must pray always without becoming weary. The persistent widow received a favorable ruling precisely because she did not give up. She persistently sought justice and it was granted to her.

The great Dominican spiritual theologian of last century, Fr. Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange (d. 1964), in his book about God's Providence, mentions the important virtue of serenity. He says:

Then, amidst the joyful and painful events of life, the clash of temperaments, in times of spiritual dryness, amidst the snares of the devil or of men, their suspicion and their jealousies, the soul in its higher regions at any rate remains always at peace. It enjoys this serenity because it is intimately persuaded that God is guiding it and, in abandoning itself to Him, it seeks only to do His will and nothing more.¹

He says it remains at peace because it is intimately persuaded that God is guiding it. How many of us could agree with that statement, that we are intimately persuaded of God's guidance? If not, then we must ask ourselves why this is and what is preventing us from being persuaded?

On Friday, when giving a tour of the Cathedral to a group of school children, one asked why a ship was pictured over the door on the Selby Ave. side, near the chapel of St. Peter. I explained that the ship is an ancient image of the Church. St. Thérèse of Lisieux wrote in her autobiography, *The Story of a Soul*: “[T]he symbol of a ship always delights me and helps me to bear the exile of this life. Does not the Wise Man tell us—”Life is like a ship that passeth through the waves: when it is gone by, the trace thereof cannot be found”?

¹ Reginald Garrigou-Lagrange, “Providence,” 1932. Part IV: Self-Abandonment to Providence, #23

The area between the narthex and the sanctuary is the “nave.” Taken from the Latin *navis*, it signifies the reality that the Church is a ship, protecting those within it from the waves and buffets of the world.² That image figures prominently here with the carved waves.

This image appears first in the catacombs, so indeed it is ancient. The idea is at least as old as Tertullian, born in the mid 2nd century. In commenting on the passage about Peter trying to walk on the water:

But that little ship did present a figure of the Church, in that she is disquieted “in the sea,” that is, in the world, “by the waves” that is, by persecutions and temptations; the Lord, through patience, sleeping as it were, until, roused in the last extremities by the prayers of the saints, He checks the world, and restores tranquility to His own.”³

In these troubling times, both in society and even in the Church, may your souls remain tranquil and serene. Offer your prayers each day for the Church and the world, especially for the Church. In times of uncertainty, when all seems subject to change, we hold fast to immutable truths, secure in the knowledge that Jesus is steering the ship of the Church into safe harbor.

² Denis McNamara, *How to Read Churches: A Crash Course in Ecclesiastical Architecture*, (New York: Rizzoli, 2011), page 90.

³ Tertullian (*De bap.*, xii; P. L., I, 1214) Chapter 12. Of the Necessity of Baptism to Salvation