

Homily for requiem mass of Eva Hajdu (27 February 2018) / Sajnos nincs magyar fordítás!

(Jn5:24-29) In the communist world that Eva and Zoltan left behind, the war against Christ's Church was conventional. There was no denying it. But the communist propaganda of yesteryear has been matched in our day by the organized exclusion of God from public life in Western countries. Take for example the practical impossibility of teaching any semblance of religion in American public schools! Take the woeful secularization of public life! Take the exaltation of sin as a human right in the media and academia! We needn't wonder why a generation of agnostics and atheists is growing up in our midst without any faith. Our beloved Eva survived a conventional war against her faith in Communist Hungary, but she should be more roundly applauded for surviving a more insidious conflict – the virtual war waged here in America against that same faith.

According to an anecdote from the desert fathers, a young monk sought counsel from an old, wise monk. "Father," he said, "will people of future ages fast and pray for days on end like we do?" The old monk answered, "No, but they will be greater than us. We fight Satan while he is chained. They will fight him unchained." My brothers and sisters in Christ! Satan has definitely been unchained today in America where open season has been declared on the baby in the womb, where doublespeak even includes the redefinition of gender, where up is down and right is wrong. Our beloved Eva contended with Satan unchained and she prevailed. She was great indeed! She clung tenaciously to her faith despite intimidating threats in the East and mesmerizing distractions in the West. Since faith was so very dear to her, it would be worthwhile right now to take a closer look at faith, which is becoming a rare commodity in our day.

Faith is a virtue and a virtue is simply a good habit. This statement isn't intended to trivialize faith. A deeply ingrained habit becomes second nature. Eva and Zoltan attended daily mass. They turned their home into a little monastery of sorts where they spent long hours together in prayer. When we live like this, faith becomes instinctive – as if it were hard-wired into our genetic code. Faith, as we have said, is a virtue. Like all virtues it lies in the middle between two contrary vices – one vice being a deficiency, the other an excess. Consider the virtue of hope for a moment! Hope lies between the opposite extremes of despair and presumption. Despair has too little of hope's active ingredient, presumption has too much of it. If a student despairs of passing his test, he won't study because it seems useless. If he is presumptuous, on the other hand, then he won't study either because it seems superfluous. Although opposite extremes, these two vices have more in common with one another than either one of them has with hope in the middle – they both prevent the student from studying. Hope alone inspires him to crack the books. The virtue of courage also lies between two opposite extremes. Cowardice has too little of courage's active ingredient while foolhardiness has too much of it. Cowardice is afraid of everything while foolhardiness is afraid of nothing. The courageous man, however, is afraid of some things but not everything. Only courage wins the war. The coward retreats when he should fight while the foolhardy man fights when he should retreat.

Like other virtues, faith also lies in between two contrary extremes: credulity and incredulity. Credulity, or gullibility, has too much of faith's active ingredient while incredulity, or rationalism, has too little of it. Credulity believes absolutely everything; incredulity believes absolutely nothing. Authentic faith, on the other hand, believes some things but not everything. Although opposite extremes, credulity and incredulity are very similar: they both spell the end of authentic religion. Credulity believes every religion, incredulity believes none. Faith alone believes the one true religion to the exclusion of all others. Credulity is completely subjective: all that matters is what I, the subject, decide to believe. My choice is everything. Incredulity is completely objective: I have no choice. Objective evidence compels me to acknowledge a truth that is outside of me. Once I see this microphone/podium, I have no choice. Sure, I might say it isn't here, but internally I can no longer believe anything but what my eyes tell me. My brothers and sisters in Christ! If credulity depends on an absolute whim and incredulity depends on absolute proof, what then does faith in the middle depend on? – Nothing more or less than a sign – which is less than proof yet more than a whim.

Scientists are only persuaded by absolute proof; so many today feel that logic is on the side of incredulity or rationalism. According to them, we shouldn't believe anything without absolute proof. However reasonable this may seem in theory, in practice it is a fatal error. Let me explain! Faith is believing something as certain even though I didn't see it for myself. Why do I believe? – Because I am convinced by the testimony of a witness – someone who did see it. When that witness is a human being, then we are talking about human faith. When that witness is God – speaking through His prophets in the Old Testament or His Church in the New – then we are talking about divine faith. A case in point: Despite the lack of any proof, none of you had the slightest doubt, until now, that I am a priest; but now, some of you may have started to wonder. After all, none of you was at my

ordination. I simply presented myself as a priest and others accepted me as such. This is human faith. Do you see how second nature human faith is to us? Human life is impossible without it. Without proof, we routinely believe that the pilot can fly the plane, the surgeon can operate and the cook won't poison us. We habitually act on information for which we have no proof. If we needed proof before acting on any piece of information, then our life would be completely frustrated. We might as well not get out of bed in the morning! Logic, therefore, is on the side of faith. Human faith corroborates the most trivial aspects of life but it isn't limited to these: after all, we only know who our parents are through human faith!

If human life is impossible to live without human faith, then we shouldn't fault God for making the divine life of heaven impossible to attain without divine faith. He's only expecting as much trust from us as we routinely give to one another. So let's not perform an autopsy on the articles of our Catholic faith when we seldom bother to take the temperature of human assertions! Let's be consistent! That's all God expects of us. Humanity's fall from grace began back in paradise when Eve believed the devil's lies without absolute proof. She believed Satan. You might say that mankind fell through faith, so we must also be saved through faith. We too must believe God without absolute proof. We must be consistent! For the measure with which we measure will be measured back to us. (Mt7:2b) In the Our Father we pray, "Forgive us our trespasses as we forgive those who trespass against us." (Mt6:12) Here again, God is only expecting us to be consistent.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ! I care for an elderly flock at St. Stephen of Hungary Catholic Church in Los Angeles. For this reason, I am well acquainted with the concerns of older Catholics. As they draw near to the end of this earthly pilgrimage, aches and pains can grow into intense sufferings. But they would rather die a dozen deaths than see the younger generations – whether within their families in particular or the world at large – growing up today without the faith. So I resolve to give a few reasons at their funeral masses for the faith that they hold so dear. That is my purpose now. We have already said that faith is based on signs which are less than a proof but more than a whim. There are umpteen signs that we could consider. Here, however, we only have time to consider one of them – the greatest sign Jesus worked: His own resurrection from the dead. In today's gospel, our Lord solemnly assured us with a double 'amen' that the dead will hear the voice of the Son of God summoning them to rise from the grave. One day our beloved Eva will hear Jesus' voice summoning her back to life in her glorified body. We needn't simply take Jesus at His word in today's gospel. He has validated His word with one mighty deed: He Himself has risen from the grave.

A bodily resurrection may seem incredible but the alternative is even more so. Did the apostles say to themselves, "While Jesus was alive, we couldn't convert one single nation, but now that He is dead, we can convert the entire world?" They didn't, however, simply preach the gospel throughout the known world, with one exception they also died for it. Instead of wealth or worldly advantage, their tireless labors only earned them a dungeon and a death sentence. Finding even one person who will die for the truth is difficult. Are nearly a dozen men going to die for a lie? That's what the apostles did if they never really saw the risen Lord. I find it easier to believe in Jesus' resurrection, than to believe that the apostles died cruel deaths for the sake of a lie. Jesus' humiliation and defeat at the crucifixion were absolute. How do we explain the stunning worldwide success of Christianity today without the intervention of some astounding victory like the resurrection? Dear friends in Christ! There are countless other signs that validate our faith, but the empty tomb is reason enough to believe in the faith that Eva Hajdu steadfastly practiced in season and out, despite intimidating threats and mesmerizing distractions. Eva was a model Catholic but she would be the last one to canonize herself. I know she would want me to end with an appeal for prayers on her behalf. After her many labors and patient endurance, may she rest in peace until the resurrection of the just! And may perpetual light shine upon her! Amen!