

SoulSpace

SERIES: JUST THREE WORDS

Season colour: **WHITE**

In this series, **Clare Gilmore** explores the sheer depth contained in 'just three words'.



HELP MY
UNBELIEF

Have you ever experienced doubt? I imagine everyone reading this reflection is answering "Yes" right now. We doubt whether someone is telling the truth or not... we doubt what decision to make... we doubt governments... we doubt a person's ability to do the job... we doubt if we can be forgiven... we even doubt ourselves. And yes, at times, we doubt our faith.

I have good news for you – you are not alone! The three words we are considering this week are "Help my unbelief". I have taken them from the Gospel of Mark (9:24) and they are the final three words of the infamous statement: "I believe; help my unbelief!"

CONTRADICTION?

At first glance, it may seem that this statement is a contradiction in terms. How can you say you believe and not believe at the same time? It doesn't make sense.

The words are spoken by the father of a boy who was possessed. He had brought his son to Jesus' disciples for healing but each of them failed in helping, so he was brought to Jesus. The father pleaded with Jesus to help: "if you are able". Jesus reassures him that all things are possible, and the man declares: "I believe; help my unbelief."

For me there is no contradiction. Had the father not believed the boy could be healed he wouldn't have wasted his time bringing him to Jesus. On the other hand, when faced with the reality of his little boy finally being healed, he hesitated. How many of us wouldn't do the same? Faced with all our dreams coming true, how many of us wouldn't doubt that it was 'too good to be true'!

ROOM FOR DOUBT

When it comes to faith, there are lots of things that seem 'too good to be true', and so there's lots of room for doubt. Let me share some personal examples:

I believe in the resurrection. I believe in life after death. I really do. Yet, when faced with my friend's terminal illness and finally her death, I found myself asking "Do I *really* believe she is alive? Do I *really* believe in heaven? Do I *really* believe in God's all-embracing love and forgiveness?"

I believe that God is with us always, that his presence surrounds us in every moment and that he cares intimately about you and me and about our lives. Yet, in times when life is difficult and things aren't going

the way I had hoped they would, and in times when life is downright hard, I find myself asking "Does God *really* care? Is he *really* with me?"

TAKING FAITH SERIOUSLY

The truth is that many of us have inherited our faith. Archbishop Desmond Tutu, in his book *God is not a Christian*, writes that "the accidents of birth and geography determine to a very large extent to what faith we belong. The chances are that if you were born in Pakistan you are a Muslim, or a Hindu if you were born in India... and a Christian if you were born in Italy." Whatever faith we have inherited, it is vital that as we mature, we own our faith for ourselves – and that means asking questions and discovering the answers that ring true for us personally.

Doubt can be the stimulus for these questions. It throws things up in the air, disrupts any complacency that may have set in, and gives us the chance to re-think things. In fact, I often find that asking questions and searching for answers only serves to strengthen my faith, not weaken it.

IT'S A GOOD THING

Despite what some may say, the opposite of faith is not doubt – the opposite of faith is certainty! And so, when we experience times of doubt, it's not the bad thing it appears to be. It could even be said that struggling with God over issues we find difficult to understand is not a lack of faith – it is faith!

If you are still concerned, let me remind you that Jesus has said all you and I need is "faith the size of a mustard seed" (Luke 17:6). So, let's turn in honesty to God and pray that he "help my unbelief". ■



Today's readings

Acts 4:32-35

1 Jn 5:1-6

Jn 20:19-31

GOD'S WORD TODAY

How can you depict the excitement and surprise of Thomas as Jesus invites him to put his hand into his side and see for himself that he is the one who hung from the cross on Good Friday? The hand of Jesus still carries the print of the nails and his side is still a gaping wound. Today is Divine Mercy Sunday. In a world that has lost its sense of the value of the human person, St John Paul, in asking us to celebrate Divine Mercy Sunday with its Gospel of the wounded Lord, wished to restore to us a sense that a human person is valuable, not only when

it is healthy and beautiful. It is perhaps even more valuable when its first stirrings of life in the womb are regarded as a problem to be got rid of, or when it is frail and broken by illness, hovering on the edge of death for months, even years, as Pope John Paul would prove to be. When the human body is wounded and broken, the light of resurrection sometimes seems to glow most tellingly from its very woundedness.

Parishes of Dromara and Drumgooland

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2nd Sunday of Easter – 11th April 2021

Anniversary Masses

Leitrim

Sat 10th Margaret and Teresa Murphy
Wed 14th Mary Rose and PF McCartan
Sat 17th 11am Margaret McCrickard (MM)
Sat 17th Patsy McAnulty
Margaret Morgan
John and Agnes Boyd

Gargory

Sun 11th Eamonn Doyle

Dromara

Sun 11th Gerry and Cissie O'Hare (Finnis)
Fri 16th Kathleen McMahan

Dechomet

Mon 12th Mary and Henry O'Hare
Pat and Mary Doyle (Dechomet)
Sat 17th Patrick Hunt and Elizabeth Doyle

Thank you for the generous financial support

	<u>Parish</u>	<u>Priest/Easter</u>	<u>Trócaire</u>
Dromara	£982	£836	£495
Drumgooland	£1660	£2192	£460

Trócaire has obtained matched funding from the UK government this year. So, every pound donated will be doubled for the Lenten Campaign.

It has not been possible to distribute Trócaire boxes, but are available in the churches if anyone wants to take one. Donations can be returned in late April or May. For more details visit www.trocaire.org where you can also donate online, or ring 0800 912 1200

Gift Aid

The 2020 Gift Aid claim will be prepared and submitted within the coming months. If anyone who has previously signed a gift aid form but is no longer paying tax please let me know so that your donations can be excluded from the claim.

Drumgooland St Vincent de Paul

Are you experiencing difficulties and need a helping hand?
Contact us in confidence on 075 8644 7427

Weekend masses

Sat 6:00pm Dechomet 7:30pm Leitrim
Sun 9:00am Gargory 11:00am Dromara

Masses for during the week

Mon 9:00am Leitrim 7:30pm Dechomet
Tue 9:00am Dromara
Wed 7:30pm Leitrim
Fri 7:30pm Dromara
Sat 11:00am Leitrim

Keeping Everyone Safe

Please do all you can to help protect yourself and the people around you. Please observe the 2m distance and remind those who have forgotten. To all those who can wear a face covering, please do so. Please sanitise your hands, and many thanks to all who clean their seats afterwards. If the church has reached capacity please do not enter.

Readers

Thank you to all the people who helped by reading over the past week. If anyone is willing to read, please let me know and rotas can be organised for each church.