

St John Vianney Feast:

Liturgy of the Hours: Solemn Vespers (03 August 2018)

Homily by Fr Sbongiseni Msomi

The words that came to my mind as I was reflecting about the life of St John Vianney are the words taken from a Hymn in English, “The Chances we have missed and the graces we resist.” ... **Missing a chance and resisting grace.**

One can actually say that St John Vianney did not miss a chance to serve God and His Church well; and by that he was open to the grace of God. He never missed a chance to be corrected and by doing that he was open to the grace of God. He was open to Formation and by that he was receptive of God’s grace. He was open to the Holy Spirit. I would like us to reflect upon this, “missing a chance and resisting the grace of God.”

Samuel in our Scriptural Reading today, was sent by God to anoint a King. Perhaps we need to call to mind, firstly, the call of Samuel. He was called by God while he was sleeping in the Temple and through the direction of Eli, Samuel responded to the Call. He did not miss the chance to be directed by an elder; and by doing that, he was receptive to the grace of God. When we refuse to be directed and to be taught by another, when we refuse to learn from other people and when we refuse to be led by another person, then we are resisting the grace of God which is sufficient for us. It is like a child who refuses to listen to his parents, who abandons the values and morals like respect taught by his parents; when things go wrong in the life of a child, he remembers that ‘My parents told me about this and if only I had listened to them then things would be different now’. Refusal to listen to someone’s advice is to refuse the grace of God and is to deny the Holy Spirit who continues to speak to and counsel us so that we are in the right direction. **Missing a chance and refusing grace.**

Please observe one moment with me here. When Jesse tells Samuel that David is not around, Samuel replies “go and call him, we will not Seat until he has arrived”. This is both beautiful and exciting. It is a sign that God is always waiting for us to return to Him. It is a sign that when God has approved no one can disapprove. In fact, when we are disapproving God’s plan we are actually resisting his grace in our lives. When something is meant for you no one can stop that. We need to be open to this plan of God. Our God is a God of many chances not just a God of second chance, but many chances. We are the ones who miss the chance to be loved by God and we are the ones who resist His grace and then trust in our own strength and demand our own will. We can see here, that it is God who chooses. And His grace is sufficient to sustain us friends. When one

refuses to be sent and when you deliberately miss that chance, you are actually resisting the grace of God that is sufficient to sustain you. I remember one senior priest advising me never to refuse to be sent by the Church. He said to me to accept an appointment to work somewhere else might be the grace of God working, protecting you from a heavy storm that you might not be aware of. But to refuse, you are actually refusing the grace of God. **Missing the chance and resisting the grace.**

Listen to the words of what St John Vianney once said, ***“You must accept your cross; if you bear it courageously, it will carry you to heaven.”*** To refuse and miss out on carrying out your cross, is to resist heaven. In fact, by carrying a cross means that I face my own struggles, I am aware of my own weaknesses and my own burdens and I don't try to deny it.

In missing a chance to greet someone is to resist communion; missing a chance to affirm someone is to refuse to learn from the other; missing a chance to pray is to resist the grace of God. May I never miss a chance to do the right thing, to make a right decision.