

Sunday Homily
29th Sunday of Ordinary Time C
Ex 17:8-13; 2 Tim 3:14-4:2; Lk 18:1-8
October 17, 2010

By Deacon Jeff Claar

75% Science, 25% Miracle...

That is how Macarena Valdes described her role in freeing the trapped Chilean miners from their 70 days ordeal. You see, Ms. Valdes is the topographer who was responsible for charting the exact course for those who drilled the hole to free the 33 men whose lives literally were in her hands.

The data provided to her by the geologists told her what angle to take, but her instinct, her “gut feeling” she called it, told her to adjust this angle down one degree to account for the vibration of the drilling. Over 30 times she tried, and over 30 times the drill failed to find its mark, but she persevered, and she stuck to her instinct.

And finally, her “gut feeling” paid off; after 17 days of working nonstop against seemingly hopeless odds, the drill broke through into the dark and hot chamber that held the miners captive underground! The miraculous rescue we witnessed on Wednesday began with the persistent and unwavering belief of Macarena Valdes.

Where did this “gut instinct” of hers come from? Was it just a woman’s intuition, or could this feeling have had another source?

And with contact established with the miners, one of their first requests was for bibles, rosaries, a crucifix and a statue of the Blessed Virgin. You see, in their darkest hour, when all seemed lost, it was not a new way of prayer that they sought, but an old way of prayer.

Only in the familiar and comfortable prayers of our Catholic faith could they cope with what was absolutely unfamiliar and uncomfortable. They wanted their God as they had always known Him, big and powerful, and capable of anything. They wanted their spiritual Mother to intercede for them to Her Son and to comfort them in their trials just as she always had since their youth.

And they wanted, and needed to pray together as brothers in a way that few of us will ever know.

My brothers and sisters in the faith let us all be encouraged in our own prayer lives by the example of our brothers who were lost, but now found.

Oh, I am sure none of them are saints, just as we are not saints, but their perseverance in prayer can be a powerful example to us as we deal with the trials put before us in our lives.

And if we find our own prayer lives in need of a rescue, let us look with new eyes upon the power of the familiar prayers of the Church, just as these men did, in particular the prayer of the rosary.

This miracle and many others throughout the centuries have been attributed to the power of rosary because our Our Lady of Sorrows cannot ignore her children when they ask for her help by way of her rosary.

And if this form of prayer does not speak to you, begin just where you are and engage your God in a conversation. Let Him know what you hope for and dream about. Let Him know what challenges you and what burdens you. He is always there, just waiting for us to begin the conversation.

Jimmy Sanchez, a 19 year old Catholic who was one of the 33 miners trapped for over two months in the San Jose mine, made one correction to all the stories about life in the mine: "There are actually 34 of us," he wrote in a letter sent up from the mine on Tuesday, "because God has never left us down here."

And Jimmy could only have known this truth through the power of his prayers.