

Reflection for the 27th Sunday of Ordinary Time

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "if you have the faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you." Luke 17:5,6

It does seem like we as humans are always looking for an edge, a way to improve our situation. Be it in our faith journey, in sports, at work or just in our daily lives. We might be on the lookout for the driver that will help us fix our slice and add a few yards onto our drive. It might be the shoe that is lighter and helps our feet feel more comfortable on the hard pavement. This does seem part of what we do in our daily lives, trying to improve our situation by having better tools on hand, be it at work or at play. This is what the Apostles do in our Gospel reading today when they ask Jesus to "*increase their faith.*" This is not a request that is made by one person but by the group. Universally the Apostles, the closest followers of Jesus felt that they all needed more faith. They were looking for more of what they had to be better followers of Christ. Jesus responding to them by pointing out they had what they need.

As humans living in this world, it is the norm that we would all feel we could use more, more faith, more talent, more experience. If we just look at our faith life, we can see that the more we pray, the more we attend daily Mass, and the more we learn about our faith, we are better able to follow our Lord and yes, it would appear that our faith has increased. It makes sense that we should all be trying to grow in our faith, by actively practicing our faith and growing in wisdom and knowledge of God. But it is interesting to think of the basic message that is provided to us in our Gospel Reading this Sunday, for it seems to say something different. "*The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "if you have the faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.*" Clearly one can take from these two verses found in our Gospel Reading this Sunday that we should just be content and happy with the faith that we have. In fact, we could apply this to our whole lives and see Jesus informing us that we should not make any effort to grow in faith, experience, or talent. We should just be happy with what we currently have and know that the faith, experience, and talent, that we have is enough for us to do what God is asking of us. No need to develop who we are, or to grow as a person. This viewpoint does seem somewhat limiting and does not seem to fit with the idea that we should be seeking and finding, and we should have a hunger and a thirst.

Maybe, Jesus in our Gospel Reading this Sunday is informing us that we have enough to start the journey. When Jesus sent the 12 and the 72, they still had much to learn but they were ready to start the journey. At this point it might be helpful or overdue to define "*faith.*" The book titled, *Dictionary of the Bible*, authored by John L. McKenzie S.J., states "Modern Catholic Theology defines faith with St. Thomas Aquinas as the act of the intellect when it assents to divine truth under the influence of the will moved by God through grace." The definition of the word "*faith,*" in the book written by Fr. John McKenzie is further expanded on by stating, "the Hebrew word which is the basis of the New Testament words *pistis* and *pisteuein* (faith, belief, trust), is *aman*, which basically means to be firm or solid, and hence to be true." It might be interesting to note that the root of the word *amen* (used to express solemn ratification, as an expression of faith) is *aman*. Be it the definition based on the works of St. Thomas Aquinas or the definition based on the Hebrew word *aman*, the definition of the word "*faith*" confirms what Jesus is saying in our Gospel Reading this Sunday to His Apostles, that the faith we have is enough. For the definition of faith found in Fr. McKenzie book defines faith not as something that is a quantity, but rather an active movement. That does not mean that we should stop exercising our faith or growing in faith. What it means is we are ready for the journey of faith; there is no need to wait or worry. May you and I just trust in God and know that we have sufficient faith to move forward in our journey of faith, no need to wait or delay.