

GOSPEL

LUKE 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.' The Lord replied, 'Were your faith the size of a mustard seed you could say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you.

'Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, "Come and have your meal immediately?" Would he not be more likely to say, "Get my supper laid; make yourself tidy and wait on me while I eat and drink. You can eat and drink yourself afterwards"? Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told? So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, "We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty."

The Gospel of the Lord.

A REFLECTION BY POPE FRANCIS

Today, the Reading from the Gospel begins like this: "The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith!'" It seems that we can all make this our invocation. Let us too, like the Apostles, say to the Lord: "Increase our faith!". Yes, Lord, our faith is small, our faith is weak and fragile, but we offer it to you as it is, so that you can make it grow. Would it be good to say this all together? Shall we repeat together: "Lord, increase our faith!?" Shall we? Everyone: Lord, increase our faith! Lord, increase our faith! Lord, increase our faith! Make it grow!

And how does the Lord answer us? He responds: "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamore tree, 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea', and it would obey you". A mustard seed is tiny, yet Jesus says that faith this size, small but true and sincere, suffices to achieve what is humanly impossible, unthinkable. And it is true! We all know people who are simple, humble, but whose faith is so strong it can move mountains! Let us think, for example, of some mothers and fathers who face very difficult situations; or of some sick, and even gravely ill, people who transmit serenity to those who come to visit them. These people, because of their faith, do not boast about what they do, rather, as Jesus asks in the Gospel, they say: "We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty". How many people among us have such strong, humble faith, and what good they do!

In this month of October, that is dedicated in a special way to missions, let us bear in mind the many missionaries, men and women, who in order to bring the Gospel have overcome obstacles of every kind, they have truly given their lives. As St Paul says to Timothy: "Do not be ashamed then of testifying to our Lord, nor of me his prisoner, but take your share of suffering for the gospel in the power of God" (2 Tim 1:8). This, however, is for us all; each one of us in our own daily lives can testify to Christ by the power

of God, the power of faith. The faith we have is miniscule, but it is strong! With this power to testify to Jesus Christ, to be Christians with our life, with our witness!

And how do we draw from this strength? We draw it from God in prayer. Prayer is the breath of faith: in a relationship of trust, in a relationship of love, dialogue cannot be left out, and prayer is the dialogue of the soul with God. October is also the month of the Rosary. Let us join spiritually together in this act of trust in our Mother, and let us receive from her hands the crown of the Rosary: The Rosary is a school of prayer, the Rosary is a school of faith!

REFLECTION QUESTIONS

1. Faith is not a question of 'size' but rather one of being in right relationship with the one in whom we have faith. This right relationship is one of complete surrender to the will of the other. What might it mean for you to have faith which simply means 'being at God's disposal'?
2. How do you hear and obey God's voice in your life, giving you direction in decisions and choices that you make?

PRAYER

Spend some time in prayer with one another

1. Conscious of what has just been shared, members briefly name/ describe their prayer needs.
2. Intentionally call on the Holy Spirit to be present (e.g. "Come Holy Spirit, please be present as we pray")
3. Move to prayers of thanks and praise to God.
4. Pray for each others' prayer needs. Where appropriate, you may like to encourage the group to place a hand on the shoulder of the individual that you are currently praying for.
5. Conclude your prayer time with another prayer of praise, perhaps reciting the 'Glory Be' or similar prayer.