



WEEKLY GOSPEL REFLECTION



27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, Cycle C

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The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Luke 17:5

All three readings today speak of faith. Today's Gospel begins with the apostle's request for increased faith. The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" Jesus' response is deliberate in suggesting that even minimal faith, properly inspired, can work wonders. Jesus tells them that it is not more faith they need, they need an impelling force to give them confidence in the faith they already have. What is that force? It is a "trifecta" in the spiritual dynamics of the power of the Holy Spirit. First, we must recognize that we are poor beggars that must pray, "Come, Holy Spirit, fill my heart." The Holy Spirit sends us and impelling force that is like the rope pull of the outboard engine that gets it started. Once our "spiritual engine" is started the rules of spiritual dynamics come into play and "jump start" our sluggish, selfish heart. Second, once impelled, we feel a compelling churning within us. That is the spiritual awakening of compassion. Then that enlivened faith "the size of a mustard seed" propels us forward into mission.

The parable that follows makes a critical point that Jesus speaks of often: "For even the Son of Man did not come to be served, but to serve, and to give his life as a ransom for many." Matthew 20:28 The question Jesus poses has an obvious answer. Even though the servant had worked all day in the fields, he would still be expected to serve in the spirit of ministry to our master. Who is his "master?" "I was hungry and you gave me food, I was thirsty and you gave me drink, I was a stranger and you welcomed me, I was naked and you clothed me, I was sick and you visited me, I was in prison and you came to me." Matthew 25:35-36

The point is not that our efforts are ever in any way useless. The point is that our service is ministry, the path to joy beyond all other human efforts. God loves a cheerful giver (see 2 Cor 9), and blesses the believers with gifts beyond measure. Our service is a response to God's grace. Salvation is always a gift; no matter how long and how well we serve the Lord, we do not earn our way to heaven.

This week reflect on the mystery of the encounter of the Sacred Heart of Jesus where we empty ourselves of self-serving ways, and take on in our fleshy hearts the heart of Jesus, where we are transformed and, in catechetical terms, "divinized." His divine mercy is then manifold as it perfectly blends all our God-given gifts within us producing the fruits that feed the hungry, thirsty, lonely, naked, sick and imprisoned hearts of the world. That is the gift of the Holy Spirit that enriches us with a heart of charity.

Reflect on the importance of faith and of our debt of gratitude to God.

*Stir into flame the gift of God,
for he did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control. Timothy 1:6-8*

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke.

The apostles said to the Lord,
"Increase our faith!"

The Lord replied,
"If you had 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."

"Who among you would say to your servant
who has just come in from ploughing or tending sheep in the field,
'Come here at once and take your place at the table'
Would you not rather say to him,
'Prepare supper for me,
put on your apron and serve me while I eat and drink;
later you may eat and drink'?"

"Do you thank the servant for doing what was commanded?
So you also, when you have done all that you were ordered to do, say,
'We are worthless servants;
we have done only what we ought to have done!'"

The Gospel of the Lord