

Increase our Faith!

Twentieth-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time – Lk 17:5-10
Ave Maria Catholic Church, October 2, 2022 – Fr. David M Vidal

The apostles said to the Lord: *“Increase our faith,”* (Lk 17:5).

Sometimes, we are overwhelmed by what we see and hear, and it is hard to believe that something good will happen when surrounded by so much evil. On top of that, we often experience our own littleness, tiredness, and discouragement.

But even in the midst of all these things, we are called to be people of faith who judge things according to a point of view that goes beyond what we perceive in this world. Then, the apostle’s prayer is just and fitting: *“Lord, increase our faith.”*

What Does It Mean to Believe?

Every Sunday, during Holy Mass, we make our profession of faith and say: *“I believe.”* This expression is used in daily language, even apart from religious context, especially any Christian context, “I believe you” means “I trust you,” I am convinced that you are telling the truth.

Now, God speaks to us. God “reveals Himself” and manifests the saving “hidden purpose of his will.” That revelation requires, on our part, an answer. This answer is “the obedience of faith” through which we freely abandon ourselves to God, and we “freely assent to the truth revealed by Him,” (DV 5).

We say, “I believe in one God,” who cannot deceive Himself or deceive me. No one is more credible than Him, and no one has the authority of truth as He does. Then, we begin to know by faith, and this is God’s gift.

The *Catechism of the Catholic Church* (nn.153-155) teaches: *“Faith is a gift of God . . . Believing is possible only by grace and the interior helps of the Holy Spirit. In faith, the human intellect and will cooperate with divine grace: ‘Believing is an act of the intellect assenting to the divine truth by command of the will moved by God through grace.’”*

Faith is the beginning of spiritual life in us. According to the words of Saint Paul: *“The just man lives by faith,”* (Gal. 3:2).

What does it mean to live by Faith?

In different passages, Jesus uses the example of the mustard seed. Despite its diminutive size, one tiny mustard seed can produce a five to six feet tall tree. The miracle of faith can

be compared to that seed that seems insignificant according to our human eyes, but it is living and powerful.

Now, the comparison does not end there. A plant will not live without roots. The role of faith may also be compared to that of the root, which fixes the tree to the ground, and by its imperceptible but unceasing work, maintains its strength. All the growth of the tree depends on this hidden nourishment. Cut the roots, and the tree will undoubtedly perish, however splendid and full of life it may be.

Saint Paul encourages the Colossians to remain “*founded in faith*,” (Col. 1. 23). Faith is our foundation, like the roots of the tree grounded in the soil are the tree’s foundation. The wind will blow, and the rain will fall, but the tree will stand still only if it has good roots and is firmly grounded in that soil. Then, the tree might lose some leaves and branches, but as far as it is not uprooted, life will continue, and leaves and branches will be restored.

For this reason, faith is the shield that will protect us from trials and adversities. In the words of the apostle John: “*This is the victory that overcomes the world, your faith*,” (1 John 5: 4).

How does Faith work in us?

1. Faith teaches us what we are and what we look for.

Faith reveals to us God’s beautiful work of creation. We are his creatures, the work of his hands! We came from Him, and we return to Him. That is the meaning and purpose of our lives. And we know that our return to God has a path, and that path is Christ. He is the way that leads us back to God, and *no one returns to the Father except through Him*, (John 14:6).

2. Faith teaches us how to use created things and to respect others.

Things of this world are instruments, aids, and the assistance that should help us to be united to God, our end. Faith corrects our vision when we forget our Creator, spending our lives worshipping mere creatures.

Faith also gives us a correct understanding of our neighbors. The one next to me has been called like myself to inherit eternal life with God. If that is the case, I will be a good neighbor only if I try to assist him in achieving that goal. Faith teaches us that we must not be an obstacle to the salvation of others and that we are our brother’s keepers.

3. Faith fills us with gratitude for our victories and with repentance and sorrow for our failures.

What do we see when we examine our achievements, the most beautiful moments, and accomplishments in our lives? Faith helps us to see that they are gifts and that every good and perfect gift comes from above! (James 1: 17). Faith helps us to be grateful for those gifts.

Faith also gives us the correct answer to our failures. The proper answer to failures and defeat is *a humble heart*. Faith teaches us to say: “I am sorry,” “I truly want to do better,” “*O God, blot out all my iniquities, a clean heart create for me, renew within me a steadfast spirit,*” (Psalm 51: 11-12).

Let us examine our crises. Then, we will discover behind them a lack of faith.

We will truly discover the intensity of our faith in moments of difficulties and trials. In “good moments,” in moments of peace and joy, it is easy to say, “*I believe!*” However, when temptations, desolations, and difficulties arrive, then, and especially then, we must renew our faith.

Let us ask for the grace to be people of faith. Today and always, the prayer of the apostles must be our prayer: “*Lord, increase our faith!*” May Our Blessed Mother help us to profess the Creed in times of peace and in moments of trials. May we live every day saying: “*I believe,*” Amen