

OCTOBER 6, 2019
Sunday of the 27th Week in OT
Lk. 17: 5-10

LORD, HELP ME TO PUT MY FAITH INTO ACTION.

In our gospel for today, why the disciples asked Jesus “Increase our faith?” Why the disciples wanted to increase their faith if they were with Jesus all the time? Let’s have a little review of our past Sunday gospels. Last week September 29, we heard about the story of the rich man and Lazarus wherein it described how difficult for the rich to get into heaven. September 22, we heard the praise for the squandering and dishonest servant. If you knew that your neighbor had to pay back only 50% of her mortgage while you paid 100% of it, would you be happy or applaud her? I’d probably complain. September 15, the gospel was about the prodigal son and the forgiving father. Can you forgive a son or daughter who desolate you and wasted his or her inheritance on a lifestyle of unworthy acts. It is not very easy. And last September 8, Jesus said that the last will be first and the first last. These are some of the “rules and regulations” of Jesus that the disciples need to follow, that’s why, they asked “Lord, increase our faith.” And we know that it is not only the disciples of Jesus experienced difficulties and hardships in following Him. We too, we need to plead with Him: “Lord, increase our faith. Help us to follow your teachings.”

What is the response of Jesus towards the pleading of his disciples? It seems that He is critical to the disciples’ faith or gave a sarcastic answer, as though Jesus is saying: “If only you had just the least little bit of faith, you’d be fine.” How do we understand the response of Jesus? Let me tell you a story to illustrate this.

It was a Sunday morning in a little chapel in South America. As Mass was beginning, a not uncommon occurrence took place: a band of men armed with machine guns came

out of the jungle and forced their way into the chapel. The priest and the congregation were very afraid. The men dragged the priest outside to be executed. Then the leader of the group came back into the chapel and demanded, "Anyone else who believes in this God stuff, come forward!" Everyone was petrified. They were frozen. There was a long silence. Finally, one man came forward and stood in front of the leader and said, "I love Jesus." He was roughly taken outside to be executed. Several others came forward and said the same thing. When no one else stood to be identified, those standing were escorted out by the leader. After the sound of machine gun fire, the leader came back in and told the remaining congregation to get out. "You have no right to be here!" he said, and with that he herded all of them out, where they were astonished to see their pastor and the others standing. The priest and those who stood up were ordered back in the chapel to continue with Mass, while the others were angrily warned to stay out. Said the leader: "Until, you have the courage to stand up for your beliefs!" and with that, the gunmen went back into the jungle. W.J. Bausch, "A World of Stories for Preachers and Teachers"

My brothers and sisters, the disciples were asking for an increase in faith not because they wanted more but how to put their faith into action. For Jesus, the character of faith is important and even the smallest amount of faith put into action is very powerful. This is what the last part of the gospel is telling us, the part about plowing, tending sheep and serving at table. Faith gets its character by how it is put into action. Faith must include standing up and acting based on beliefs.

Let us go back to my introduction about our Sunday gospels last September about the teaching of Jesus in following Him. It reminds us: if you have the means and the riches, help and give your riches to those who are poor. In our parish, support St. Vincent de Paul who are helping those who do not have. Donate your money, clothing, food and other things that can help our poor and homeless people. With your goodness, you will

be surprised at what you can accomplish with your generosity. To those people around you, recognize their goodness, even though they may not be perfect like you may think you are, you will be astonished how it will help to clarify your own self image. To those who hurt you, open yourselves to forgive them and you will be surprised that you are rebuilding a relationship. Like in the story when the priest and some members of the congregation professed their faith amidst the danger of death, let us also stand up against violence in its many forms, especially violence that threatens innocent life as we celebrate October as the Rosary Month and Respect Life Month. We need to stand and be reminded that we need to defend life at the hands of abortionists, at the hands of executioners and at the hands of those who promote assisted suicide or euthanasia. We need to put faith in action. In all of these, always remember, God is standing also, right there next to you. This is how we plow the field, tend the sheep and serve at the table. Faith is not a list of rules or beliefs that can be expanded. Faith is a virtue, and, like any other virtues, it must be put into action supported by the grace of God.

My dear brothers and sisters let us ask the Lord to increase our faith, and for the courage to put our faith into action. We all have that small seed of faith. We must use it.

Let this be our prayer: "Lord Jesus Christ, fill me with your consuming love and set my heart aflame and free to love generously and to serve selflessly. Fill me with gratitude for all you have done for me and increase my faith and loyalty to you who are My All, My Strength, and My Life. Help me and strengthen me to put my faith into action. Amen."