

Since He turned His face toward Jerusalem, almost ten chapters ago, Jesus has spoken about detachment to material things, crosses we might have to carry, the rich mercy of God, choosing the better part. Today, some of us might find His words harsh: worthless slaves, doing only what we ought to have done. Yet when we look at our lives, we do all kinds of things which simply just need to be done: take out the garbage, change diapers, do laundry, show up for work on time, cook meals, pay our bills. No one gets a standing ovation for mowing the lawn or bringing back the groceries.

We have been told, over the past several weeks, what we need to do. Now we are being given the tools to do it. Next week it will be about adopting a spirit of thanksgiving, the week after of perseverance in prayer. Today it is about faith. All the readings speak to us about faith. Faith is more than reciting our profession of faith, in just a few minutes, as important as that is. It is about relationship with God.

Increase our faith, the apostles ask. Showing us again that saints do not live in another world. They live the same frustrations, disappointments and failures as we all do; learning to trust God, believing in God; even in the seemingly trivial events of our lives.

Lord, deepen our faith. Help us trust. Give us confidence.

Between January 1968, when a man named Philip received a brand-new heart during the world's third transplant operation, until August 1969 when Philip died; his entire body – every part of his body – fought with every ounce of strength to reject that heart which was actually keeping him alive. How many people do that with the gospel? Fighting with every bit they have, despite knowing that following Jesus is the only real way to live.

Many of us have seen Fiddler on the Roof. At one point, Tevye asks Golde if she loves him. She looks at him as if he has five heads. What do you mean? For her entire married life she cooked and cleaned and mended clothes and brought in the harvest and cared for the children. And he looks at her again and asks, do you love me? Too many of us are thinking we are going to be meeting God face to face with the long list of everything we did; coming to Mass, receiving the sacraments, giving to charity, being kind to those who are difficult to love; whatever. None of that bad, indeed it is all necessary. But what are we going to say – how are we going to respond – when God asks, but did you love me?

Faith is knowing without seeing. Faith can inspire us to change directions and carry crosses we otherwise could not. Faith makes a difference in the way we view our life; the way we see the world. Faith gives us the courage to keep going despite the questions we may have. Jesus tells us today; it doesn't take much. Start with a mustard seed; the tiniest of all. And faith tells us the obvious: we cannot have faith in a God we do not believe in. But more, we cannot believe in a God we do not love.

On this weekend before Thanksgiving, can we join Peter, Andrew, James, John, Simon, all the Apostles and ask, Increase our Faith! And then, deep down, try to answer the question God might well pose: do you love me?

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