

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday 2016

The apostles approached Jesus and said. Lord, Increase our faith.

Jesus answered “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”

Can you imagine the looks on the faces of the apostles? Can you hear them saying to each other, “He’s got to be kidding!

And can you imagine the look on Jesus’ face? Perhaps a glimmer of a smile? And he says “OK, well maybe that’s a stretch. What I mean is that you can do a lot with a little.”

And what is faith anyway? Is it something that we “have”? Or is it a way of life, a way of being in the world? Isn’t faith really about the way we see the world, saying that we are all connected, and we are connected to the Creator and Jesus through the Spirit?

Is Jesus really saying that we can have power over the natural world if we have enough faith? Or does he want us simply to see the world differently? If all of us pray that the hurricane not hit Haiti and Jamaica and Cuba in the next days, will that really change its course? Or does the prayer remind us that we are connected with others who can be suffering the outcome of a natural disaster.

So if like the disciples you ask Jesus to “increase” your faith or “grow your faith”, what might he answer you? I’m going to ask you something that may make you feel a bit uncomfortable. (That’s how I imagine the apostles felt when Jesus told them

about the Mulberry tree) Would you turn to the person next to you and answer these question? What strengthens your faith? Who strengthens your faith? (just about a minute a piece) (At this point there was a lively exchange among people in the pews)

Does your faith feel stronger because of that two-minute conversation? I hope so. Why? Because “faith” is not just an individual act of the will. Because faith is about relationship it needs to be shared. That is why “faith sharing” is so important. Our faith is increased when we witness the faith of others. Something so individual and small like a mustard seed has great power when it is shared i.e. planted and nurtured. It becomes so much more.

Were your ears burning these past two days? I’m just coming from a pastoral council meeting where we were talking about ways in which we could help you feel that your faith is not just about “you” but about “you” all of you here. The real power that we have as a faith filled people comes when we are willing to open up to each other and share how God is acting in our lives. We also talked a great deal about Ignatian Spirituality. What’s that? It’s seeing the world in the way that St Ignatius of Loyola the founder of the Jesuits did. Ignatius was able to “find God in all things”. Everything had the possibility of revealing God’s working in an individual’s life but again the power of that relationship with God would become even more when it was shared and lived in a community of believers.

So if you want an “increase of faith”, don’t be afraid to share, question, listen to other people’s stories. And then like the mustard seed, we can become so much more as we put our faith into action.

