

FROM THE PASTOR

My dear brothers and sisters,

In today's Gospel, the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. When I read this request, I feel like I ask Jesus for the same thing. How often have I been like the father of the possessed boy who cries out to Jesus, "**I do believe! help my unbelief**" (Mark 9:24)? There are days when I feel like I have all the faith and trust in God that I need. Other days, I feel very weak, and question my ability to trust God. Then I read what Jesus said,

If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, "Be uprooted and planted in the sea," and it would obey you. (Luke 17:6)

No mulberry trees have moved on my account.

The funny thing is that I have seen God work in powerful ways. God has used me as an instrument of miracles – and I speak not just of the incredible miracles that happen in the Sacraments (bread and wine changing into the very Body and Blood of Christ, sinners turning into saints through Baptism and Reconciliation, etc.). I have seen alcoholics instantly changed and given the gift of sobriety. I have seen God touch people on their deathbed return them to health. God truly does marvels even today. Yet, with all of the things I have witnessed, and even been a part of, I still at times struggle with faith. I wouldn't say I disbelieve God's existence (that is a grace with which God has gifted me my whole life), nor the teachings of the Catholic Church. My struggle with faith, more often than not, comes with believing in God's love for me, that God will work His love in this particular circumstance, that God wants to be active in my life.

Lord, increase my faith!

So, we need to ask ourselves, do we believe in God's love moving in our lives? Are we Deistic or Theistic? What do I mean by that? **Deism** is the belief that there is a God, and that He created everything. However, this Deistic God is one that is like a watchmaker set everything up, wound it up, and then stepped away. The Deistic understanding of God is that God created, and then watches from a distance with no involvement in creation. This is NOT what we believe as Catholics. **Theism** believes that God created, and is actively involved in His creation. This is the belief of the Catholic Church.

Again the question, though: Do we believe this in our lives? Do I truly believe that every cell in my body was created by God, and *is held in existence at each and every moment by God's constant, continual, unending, passionate, intimate, and fervent love for ME?! Do I truly believe that God is watching me every moment, not as the "Almighty Smiter" waiting for me to mess up, but as the Divine Lover who can't take His eyes off of me?!*

How many times have I fallen into the lie of self-hatred and shame, not believing in the goodness that God has created in me?!

Lord, increase my faith!

How many times have I fallen for the lie that my sins are too big for God to heal, that God cannot, will not, does not truly forgive my sins?!

Lord, increase my faith!

How many times do I end up believing the lie that I have to handle all of my troubles, and that God wants nothing to do with them?!

Lord, increase my faith!

The truth is that God wants to be intimately involved in my life, and in your life. He won't force Himself (and our refusal to let Him in is a big part of the trouble that we are in!). He longs to be one with us. May our faith in God's loving presence grow. May He transform our *little faith* into *GREAT FAITH*, so that He may do great things in us!