

Homily Outline for the 27th Sunday of the Year - Cycle C
Cathedral of the Immaculate Conception
Springfield, Illinois
October 2, 2022

† Most Reverend Thomas John Paprocki
Bishop of Springfield in Illinois

I. *Lord, increase our faith!* (Lk 17:5)

A. As is often the case, the apostles do not even know what to ask for!

1. Jesus responds that it is not the size or quantity of our faith that matters.
2. Faith the size of a small mustard seed can still do great things.
3. It is the quality of our faith that makes a difference.

B. There are different kinds of faith.

1. There is such a thing as a *dead faith*. It is a faith without works (cf. James 2:17).
2. There is also such a thing as a *dormant faith*. "This cowardly lifestyle is also known as 'lukewarmness.' Practically speaking, lukewarmness is the worst thing that can infect a Christian. It can contaminate even those who think themselves very good Christians."¹
3. We need to develop a *firm faith* that puts beliefs into practice and does not wither under attack.
 - a. In the First Reading the Prophet Habakkuk complains to the Lord about the apparent triumph of evil over good (Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4).
 - b. He laments the mistreatment of the chosen people by invaders who flaunt their scandalous behavior. "How long, Lord, am I to cry for help while you will not listen? ... Why do you set injustice before me, why do you look on where there is tyranny? Outrage and violence, this is all I see, all is contention, and discord flourishes."
 - c. The Lord answers the Prophet with a call to patience and hope. The day will come when the evil ones will be punished: "The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live."

- d. Even when it seems that evil has triumphed, as if God did not exist, we need to remember that God and His followers who keep the faith will triumph in the end.²
4. There is also such a thing as *correct faith* that believes the truth as handed on to us in Scripture and Tradition.
- a. Notice that Jesus answers the Apostles' request for an increase in faith by asking who "would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'?"
 - b. Remember that Jesus' parables typically point to His Father and His Heavenly Kingdom.
 - i) So, Jesus is saying that *correct faith* does not make demands on God as if He were our servant who must fulfill our every request.
 - ii) Yet, how often do we approach God that way, demanding that He do something for us, and if He does not fulfill our specific requests, we become angry with God.
 - iii) Our approach to God should be exactly the opposite, asking how *we* may serve *Him*. That is why Jesus tells His disciples, "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"
- C. The irony is that, despite our inferiority to the Almighty God, Jesus has prepared a heavenly banquet for us and has invited us to come and receive the Bread of Life, which He gives to us in Holy Communion in the Holy Sacrifice of the Mass.
- II. We can strengthen our faith by making many acts of faith in our prayer and during Holy Mass.
- A. It is said of St. Thomas Aquinas that when he looked upon the host at the moment of the Consecration, he would pray: *Tu rex gloriae, Christe; tu Patris sempiternus es Filius.* "You are the king of glory. You are the eternal Son of the Father."
 - B. St. Josemaría Escrivá had the custom of praying at that moment of the Mass: *Adauge nobis fidem, spem et caritatem.* "Increase our faith, our hope and our love."

Whenever he made a genuflection, he would pray: *Adoro te devote, latens deitas.* "I adore you with devotion, hidden God."³

C. Many of the faithful have the custom of praying at the moment of Consecration those words of the Apostle Thomas: *My Lord and my God!*

D. I like to add, "Help me to persevere in faith, hope, and love."

III. We can also strengthen our faith by imitating the Apostles, who were conscious of their defects as well as conscious of the infinite power of Almighty God, and by praying for their help along with Our Lady's, to increase our faith that we may be faithful to the end of our days. With God's grace, we can bring many others to Christ in the process.⁴

A. Our Blessed Mother will always be a tremendous source of faith and hope, especially when we are most in need.

B. In his book, *The Narrow Gate*, Federico Suarez wrote this about the Virgin Mary: "We, sinners, know that she is our Advocate who never gets tired of lending us a hand again and again, as often as we fail and make an effort to rise again; we who go through life fumbling and faltering, who are weak to the point of not being able to avoid the pains inherent to our human condition, know that she is the comforter of the afflicted, the refuge where as a last resort we may find a bit of peace, a bit of serenity (that special consolation that only a mother can give and that makes everything all right again). We know also that in those moments when our helplessness reaches almost exasperation or despair, when nobody can do anything anymore and we feel utterly forlorn with our sorrow or our shame, up against the wall, she is still our hope, our beacon light; she can still be appealed to when there is no longer anyone to appeal to."⁵

IV. May God give us this grace. Amen.

¹ P. Rodriguez, *Faith and Life of Faith*, p. 138.

² Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 5 (London, New York: Scepter, 1989), p. 179.

³ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 5 (London, New York: Scepter, 1989), p. 182.

⁴ Francis Fernandez, *In Conversation with God*, vol. 5 (London, New York: Scepter, 1989), p. 183.

⁵ Federico Suarez, *The Narrow Gate* (London, New York: Scepter, 1971), p. 126.