

## **October 6, 2013 Increase Our Faith Homily:**

Brothers and sisters, whenever we celebrate a birthday, a longstanding and time-honored custom is observed. Just prior to extinguishing the birthday candles, the one honored is asked to make a wish. Sometimes this wish is made known to all the partygoers. A sampling of wishes commonly heard; "I hope to live to a ripe old age", "I hope to be accepted at the school of my choice", "I want a new car", etc.

In today's gospel reading, the Apostles make known their wish in the form of a prayer. It is interesting to note that they did not ask for material goods, such as gold or silver, a horse or a fishing net. Nor did they ask to enjoy the privileges of the rich and powerful. No! The disciples instead asked for an increase in faith. "The apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith'" (Lk. 17:5) And in Luke's gospel faith is an unshakeable, unswerving trust and confidence in the Lord.

The advantage to be derived from an increase of faith is to be bearers of God's power and life, his courage and filial obedience. The Lord 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'" (Lk:17:6). All things are possible to the one who believes! What Jesus is saying is that even a small amount of faith can accomplish great things...such as transplanting a tree with its deep roots, into the sea: that is, something quite impossible!

Keep in mind that Christ is making his way to the Holy city of Jerusalem, where he will be delivered up to his enemies and later suffer an unspeakably cruel death. On the night before His death, He prayed for Simon Peter, the first of the apostles, that his faith not fail him in a moment of weakness. (Lk.22:32).

Years ago, in preparing a class on the Lord's Prayer, I learned that one of the great English martyrs of the Church, St. Thomas More wrote an impassioned letter to his beloved daughter, Meg, imploring her to pray for him that his faith not fail him while languishing in the Tower of London, awaiting a certain gruesome death. He feared that his faith may be weakened, even lost; and that the loss of one's baptismal faith is the worst possible tragedy for any person to suffer in this life.

The Catholic saint is a master of confidence and trust in the Lord Jesus. Not only is he (or she) venerated for his extraordinary virtues but also for his resolute faith in the worst of all possible circumstances. In one's struggle with the all-too-common tragedies of life, faith is our most precious gift. It is truly a Godsend!

Let us make our wish in the form of a prayer. Let us pray that the Good Lord "increase our faith". As we continue to follow Jesus on his way to the cross, may our faith be as strong as needed in the face of every conceivable crisis. In addition, let us remember in our prayers those dear to us whose faith has been weakened, or, even worse, has been lost in our secular culture.

Amen