

O. T. XXVII (OCT 3) HAB.1:2-3; 2:2-4; II TIM 1:6-8, 13-14; LUKE 17: 5-10

Many years ago, a famous shoe company sent one of its salespeople to a far away country to start a business. After a few months he sent back the message: "I am coming home. Nobody wears shoes here." The same company sent another salesperson to the same backward area. After a few months she sent this message to the home office: "Send more order forms! Nobody wears shoes here! Hence, I can sell more shoes." The second salesperson saw the opportunity in her situation - not the difficulty. She succeeded because she had faith in her product, faith in the people and faith in her ability to canvass customers. Today's readings tell us that if we have a little faith - even the smallest amount - in God's power, which He is glad to share with us, then we are on the right track.

All three readings of today speak a lot about "faith" and how it works in our lives. They give us a different dimensions of faith. The theological virtue of faith is considering something to be true and therefore worthy of trust. It is "*the assurance of the things hoped for.*" But Christian faith is trusting faith in God, expressed by steadfast loyalty, fidelity and total commitment to Him, and a resulting trust in others. In today's Gospel, Jesus teaches his apostles that faith is sharing in God's power and hence, even in small portions, it enables us to work miracles in our lives and in the lives of others. It is faith which makes one just, giving him a right relation to God and neighbor. In the Bible, faith means reliance on or confidence in God, and hope is the expectation of a better future. While the apostles ask for an increase in the quantity of their faith, Jesus reminds them that the quality of faith is more important. Using a master-servant parable, Jesus also teaches them that, for faith to be effective, it must be linked with trust, obedience and total commitment - an active submission to God and a willingness to do whatever He commands, even in tough times.

"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed." Faith is used here in three senses. 1) First, faith means "trust." People "have faith in their banks" because their accounts are insured. Similarly, we must put our trust in the authority of God and in the truth of His doctrines. St. Paul defines faith as *confidence and certainty* (Hebrews 11:1). 2) Second, faith refers to assent to doctrines about God taught by Jesus and the Church (e.g., our belief in the truths listed in the Nicene Creed and the Apostles' Creed). 3) Third, faith refers to a "bond" or "relationship," with God. Jesus tells us that if we have even a small relationship with our heavenly Father, we can do anything. No matter how weak it seems, faith is an overwhelming power. Even a little faith can direct our lives, comfort us when we are discouraged and challenge us when we are complacent. Jesus did not ask the apostles to move trees or mountains, but rather to forgive their repentant brothers and sisters. Such a requirement demanded faith, and the apostles (representing all church leaders), responded by asking that their faith be increased to meet such a demanding challenge. Jesus reminded them that it was not the greatness of their faith, but rather the greatness of God's power working through them that would

move mountains (Matt.17:20; Mark 11:23). Forgiveness is a gift of God's grace, activated through faith. When a person of faith taps into God's power all things become possible – even moving mountains or forgiving bitter enemies.

Following the example of the Apostles, we must pray for greater faith and trust in God. Most of us are inclined to forget God's providence when our earthly affairs are going well. How often do we thank Him when we enjoy good health, or when our home-life and business are going smoothly? How many of us thank God for all the gifts we have received? We often attribute our good health to correct use of food and exercise. Often we attribute our success to our hard work and intelligence. It is only when a storm arises in our life that we think of God. We pray to Him only when trouble strikes. In His infinite goodness, God often answers such prayers. If, however, we had thought of Him every day and realized His place in our lives, with how much more confidence would we approach Him in our hour of need? If our own personal lives were stronger in faith, how much more readily would we accept the adversities and the trials that God sends us? This is why we must ask God today to "increase our faith" at all times.

JOKE OF THE WEEK:

Faith of a little girl: "Whales can't swallow people," the teacher said. "Even though they are large mammals, their throats are very small."

"But the Bible teaches us that Jonah was swallowed by a whale," the little girl replied.

"My mom says Bible is God's words and it must be correct."

"That just can't be," the teacher said. "It's physically impossible."

"If so, when I get to heaven I will ask Jonah," said the little girl.

The teacher looked down at her, smiled and asked, "What if Jonah went to hell?"

The little girl replied, "Then you can ask him yourself when you get there."