

Faith and Service

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

Karen volunteers every weekend at the local food pantry. She coordinates donations, organizes volunteers, and often pays out of pocket to keep shelves stocked. But lately, she's been frustrated because few people notice her efforts and even fewer thank her. One evening she vented to a friend: "I do so much. Why does it feel like God isn't rewarding me?" Her question is not uncommon. Like many of us, Karen was overestimating both her faith and the merit of her good works.

In this Sunday's Gospel, the apostles ask Jesus, "Increase our faith." It seems like a noble request. Who doesn't want more faith? But Jesus responds in a surprising way: "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." Rather than granting their request outright, Jesus challenges their assumption. It's not about how much faith you have. Even the tiniest amount—like a mustard seed—is enough if it's real. In other words, they already have what they need; the problem lies in their understanding of what faith truly is.

True faith, as understood in the Catholic tradition, is not merely belief or emotion; it is trust in God that leads to action, even when there is no visible reward. Faith is a gift, but it must be lived out in daily obedience and love. It isn't measured by how much we feel but by how consistently we serve, forgive, and trust, especially when no one is watching.

That leads to the second part of the Gospel, the Parable of the Unprofitable Servant. Jesus tells the story of a servant who works all day in the field then returns to prepare his master's meal. The master doesn't thank the servant; he simply expects him to do his duty. Jesus concludes, "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

This teaching is hard to hear in a world that constantly affirms our worth through praise and recognition. But Jesus invites us into a deeper truth: the Christian life is not about accumulating spiritual credit. Our acts of service don't put God in our debt. Rather, they are the natural response of someone who has received everything from him in the first place. Grace is free, and our response is humble obedience.

Ultimately, both parts of this Gospel point toward humility. When we overestimate our faith or our works, we risk turning discipleship into a transaction. But Jesus shows us that even small, sincere faith can do mighty things and that humble service is our privilege, not our burden.

As writer C. S. Lewis wisely said, "Humility is not thinking less of yourself, it's thinking of yourself less." That's the heart of today's Gospel: quiet, trusting faith and humble, joyful service to God; not for reward, but simply because he is worthy.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy