Gospel Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, ‘Increase our faith.’ The Lord replied, ‘Were your 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.

‘Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep, would say to him when he returned from the fields, “Come and have your meal immediately”? Must he be grateful to the servant for doing what he was told? So with you: when you have done all you have been told to do, say, “We are merely servants: we have done no more than our duty.”’

Points to Ponder

“God revealed himself, not only in order that all men should know him as Father, Son, and Holy Spirit in the unity of the Godhead, but also in order that through the Son—the Word of God made flesh—they might, in the Holy Spirit, have access to the Father, and become sharers in the divine nature, that is in the Godhead itself.” — Karol Wojtyła, Sources of Renewal: Study on the Implementation of the Second Vatican Council, Translated by P. S. Falla. (London: William Collins Sons & Co), 1981, 53.

“Faith is born of an encounter with the living God, who calls us, and reveals his love, a love which precedes us, and upon which we can lean for security, and for building our lives.” - Francis, Lumen Fidei, n. 4

“Increase our faith.”

Here is a prayer that at least I should be praying with regularity — maybe you too. ‘Increase my faith, I do not feel like I have enough. Sometimes I don’t feel like I have any!’

Faith in our secular age is something that is constantly thrown into question. So often we fall into believing the lie that faith stands in defiance of reason, and that even if God exists, he is irrelevant.

We live in a world that has closed itself off from the transcendent and the miraculous. Yet despite the ongoing business of our day we remain haunted by the question of God’s presence. Even if we are intent on spending time with God daily in prayer, we are often still met with the constant struggle to believe — and conversely, if we are unbelievers we are constantly tortured by the question ‘what if it is true?’ We are like noted author and atheist Julian Barnes who wrote ‘I don’t believe in God, but I miss Him.’

Perhaps however, we have become prey to a faulty conception of faith. It is a very modern understanding to think of faith merely as a list of propositions to which I must give intellectual assent before I continue on my way. This however is far from what true faith is. Yes, faith is a gift that we must hold and nurture (CCC, 162), but it is ‘not an intellectual system, a collection of dogmas, or moralism. Christianity is instead an encounter, a love story; it is an event.’ (Ratzinger) Even the apostles struggled, it seems, in living from this place of encounter — and they were with Him! The apostles it seems, ask the wrong question. Faith is not a quantitative thing that they can acquire more of — it is qualitative, and it is strengthened when we open ourselves to live from that place of encounter with Christ, through daily prayer (despite the struggles), through attentive reading of the Word of God, through acts of charity and service to our neighbours.