

All three readings for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time speak a lot about “Faith” and how it works in our lives. As St Thomas Aquinas says “To one who has Faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without Faith, no explanation is possible”. It is this Faith that is the nucleus of all of our readings today. They give us three dimensions of Faith. The theological virtue of Faith enables us to believe something to be true and therefore worthy of trust simply because it has been revealed to us by God. In his instructions to Timothy, Paul defined Faith as, “the assurance of the things hoped for,” shows Faith operating as a believing, trusting, loving relationship with Christ. Finally, Christian Faith is that trusting Faith in God in action, expressed by steadfast loyalty, fidelity and total commitment to Him, resulting in our offering ourselves to Him in those we encounter, through our humble, loving service.

The first reading presents Faith as trusting in God and faithfully living out His Covenant with us. Here, Faith is shown as hope and steadfast expectation in the face of suffering and delay. God assures the prophet that Faith gives us access to Divine power, and, hence, the just will live righteous lives in the midst of encircling evil because of their Faith. In the second reading, Paul presents Faith as our acceptance of Jesus as the fulfillment of the promises of God. Paul stresses the need for a living Faith in, and loyalty to, Christ’s teachings handed down to us by the Church. Hence, Faith is belief in, and acceptance of, revealed truths based on the authority and veracity of God, and Hope is trust in God. In today’s Gospel, Jesus teaches his Apostles that Faith is sharing in God’s power, and, hence, even in small quantities, it allows God to work miracles in our lives and in the lives of others. It is Faith, meaning reliance on, or confidence in, God, which makes one just, putting him into right relation with God and neighbor. While the Apostles ask for an increase in the quantity of their Faith Jesus reminds them, and so us, that the quality of one’s Faith is more important than the quantity. A small amount of deep Faith can accomplish great things if that small amount of Faith is placed in a great, mighty, and all-powerful God. Using a master-servant parable, Jesus also teaches them, and us, that for Faith to be effective, it must be linked with trust, obedience and total commitment — an active submission to God with a willingness to do whatever He commands.

When Jesus demanded of his disciples that they respond with unconditional and unlimited forgiveness to their repentant offenders, the disciples asked Jesus for more Faith so that they could meet this demand. In addition, the Apostles were asking for greater confidence and trust in God, so that they might work the miracles which they had seen Jesus perform, like the withering of a fig-tree by a simple command. Jesus responded by telling them of the power of Faith — even a very little Faith. He used the parables of the mustard seed and the good servant to help them understand the need for strong Faith. Jesus tells us that the way we evaluate whether we are living by Faith is whether we are faithful in “doing all we have been commanded to do.”

We need to thank God, giving Him the credit for our well-being. Most of us are inclined to forget God’s providence when our earthly affairs are going well. We pray to Him only when trouble strikes. In His Infinite Goodness, God often answers such prayers. Stronger Faith enables us to accept the adversities and the trials of life asking God, “Increase our Faith, Lord!” at all times.

We need to increase our Faith by becoming dutiful servants of God. We grow in Faith as we act in Faith. A sincere Christian can find many ways to help to make Christ known to his neighbor. A quiet word, a charitable gesture, an unselfish interest in a neighbor’s troubles can do more good than a series of sermons given by some renowned theologian.

We need to grow in Faith by using the means Christ has given us in his Church. We must cultivate our Faith through prayer, Bible study, participation in the Holy Mass (“the mystery of Faith”) and leading a well-disciplined spiritual life.