

Homily – Fr. Matteo
October 2, 2022
27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
25:12-44:12

This morning I will preach a brief homily and then I will talk to you a little bit about Saint Meinrad. So let me begin with my homily.

We live in a "super-sized" culture. We're constantly told, the Bigger, the Better. So we're not content with a "Happy Meal." We want a "Happier Meal," with an extra-large drink and we want fries with that. The bigger the better. Super-size it. Everyone follows the principle: Go Big or Go Home.

Before I entered the monastery, I was a priest in the Diocese of Lexington and in my parish in St. Andrews in Harrodsburg, I had gotten a new car and the deacon tells me, "Father, now that you are in Kentucky, you really shouldn't be content with just a car. You should go buy a truck. With a truck you could put a trailer. You could attach a boat." And I'm like, "Why do I need a trailer? Why do I need a boat? And besides, for me to get into a truck, I need a ladder."

Why would I get a truck when a small guy like me can just fit in a small car?

But no. You have to super-size it. The bigger, the better. Go big or go home.

We can understand then that the apostles are following what the world tells us. They want their faith to be super-sized. "Increase our faith," they ask Jesus. Surely a super-sized faith can help them, can help us avoid sin and scandal. With a super-sized faith, we will probably not commit that sin again and again and again. With a super-sized faith, we can probably pray a little bit better. With a super-sized faith our parish would be vibrant. With a super-sized faith, my kids might go back to church. A super-sized faith can probably help me to forgive someone up to seven times a day.

But that is not how faith works. Faith is not a savings account in which you store up faith in it, so that when a rainy day comes, when times of desperation come, you just withdraw from it. No. That is not how faith works. The Lord tells us and he tells his Apostles that it does not take much when it comes to faith. He says that even a faith as small as a mustard seed can bring about great miracles. A faith as small as a mustard seed can change the landscape. You can tell this mulberry tree, "Be planted there in the sea." It'll change the landscape.

It's interesting because when the Apostles request from Jesus, "Increase our faith," they're speaking as one community. They're speaking as a group. We don't hear Peter say, "Increase MY faith, Lord." We don't hear James say, "Lord, please increase the faith of Thomas, he's always doubting, you know." Instead, as one group they say, "Increase our faith." Not just my individual faith, but our communal faith.

What is also interesting is Jesus' response. "If you have the faith the size of a mustard seed." I was a language and literature teacher before I entered the seminary. So I am always interested in Grammar. And I'm thinking the "you" here is second person singular. If each one of you has a faith the size of a mustard seed, and let's say there's 200 of us. Put that all together. That's gonna be a big jar of faith. Right? All of our mustard seed-sized faiths. That's a big jar. That'll pack a punch.

No. Jesus' response, "If you have the faith..." The "you" there is second person plural. Or as we say in Kentucky: "If ya'll have faith size of a mustard seed..." If our collective faith is even that tiny, then that means that each of our individual faith must be microscopic.

If our collective faith is the size of a mustard seed, even that can change the landscape. Even that can pack a punch. Even that can bring about miracles.

Why? Why is that so? Because a faith that tiny will have no choice, but to rely entirely on God and his grace.

A super-sized faith, on the other hand, will probably draw from its own resources and may not leave any room for the Holy Spirit to do his work.

I have a super-sized faith. I can deal with this problem. I am looking at the tank in my car of faith. I still have a quarter left. I don't need to turn to God. I don't need to stop by the church to refuel.

But faith doesn't work like that. Faith is not a "possession." It's a "disposition." Actually, faith is a relationship. If you really want to increase your faith, you have to spend more time with God. And more time with his people.

"Increase our faith." As Catholics we live as Christians in a communal relationship because we believe in a God who is community: Father, Son and Holy Spirit. What does that mean? It means we are never alone. Whatever we face, we are never alone. Increase our faith because we are facing problems. We are never alone. Increase faith. We have a God who does not leave us alone.

There's only so much that we can do without the help of the Spirit. But with him, nothing is impossible.

When it comes to faith, then, smaller is always better. Smaller is always better. Why? Because God can make great things out of small things. That is how God works. He takes the few and makes it many. He takes 5 loaves of bread and 2 fish and he feeds 5,000. He takes what is ordinary: bread and wine, and makes it extraordinary...his Body and Blood. He takes a bead of the Rosary that we pray and with it, he gives us strength. He takes a mustard seed of faith and changes the landscape. He takes something so small to change the world.

The mustard seed sized faith of the Apostles turned a swamp in the hill Vaticanus into what is now the Vatican City. He takes a mustard seed sized bit of faith in the first parishioners of Our Lady of Lourdes to turn a little house here on the corner of Washington Street into this beautiful church that we have today.

That is how God works. He takes something so small and makes it great. And he showed this to us through the Incarnation. God became "small," a little child – to make us big. Imagine the possibility of our mustard seed sized faith, what God can do with that.

You know, life makes us small. We face in life many failures, many disappointments. And we ask the Lord, "How long, O Lord, until you answer my prayer?" We have families and friends who are facing the "Big 'C'" cancer. We have family and friends who lose their memories with Alzheimer's. And when we face these failures, these disappointments, these problems, we realize just how small and how helpless we are. It is then, when we are small, that God can make us big.

You know, in life we're always on the go. We're always in a hurry. We're fast and furious, like a racecar in the Indy 500. And God, usually with old age, or with our setbacks and failures, slows us down so that he can finally catch up with us. When we're small and slow, when all we have left is faith the size of a mustard seed, that's when we turn to God. And that's when we discover God has been waiting all the while for us.

It is only when we're small that God can be big. And when we allow him to be that big in our lives, change can happen – not only in ourselves, but in our world.

Allow me now to speak to you briefly about Saint Meinrad.

There was once a high school youth group traveling from Arkansas and they arrived at Saint Meinrad late at night. As soon as they see the twin bell towers all lit up in the night sky, they cry out, "It's Hogwart's!" And the old sandstone church and buildings and the monks walking around in long black habits may give kids young and old the impression that it is a place right out of a Harry Potter book. But it's more than that.

I was a priest of the Diocese of Lexington in Kentucky for ten years before I entered the monastery five years ago. I'd studied there in the seminary and after ordination I just found myself coming back to the Holy Hill again and again. There's something magnetic about Saint Meinrad and I'm here to invite you to visit and to discover for yourselves the peace and prayer that permeates the place. Five times a day without fail, even when the great fire burned down the buildings a hundred years ago, the monks of Saint Meinrad gather to pray for the church and to pray for the world.

There's actually a connection between Saint Meinrad and Our Lady of Lourdes. Our Father Richard Hindel was administrator of this parish during the '90's (may he rest in peace). That mural right there of Our Lady of Lourdes at the west side of the church, that was painted by our Father Donald Walpole.

I'm here to invite you. Renew that connection with Saint Meinrad. And if that's not going to help, we're minutes away from Holiday World. Go visit Holiday World in Santa Claus and then stop by "Holy Day World," Saint Meinrad Archabbey.

I'm also here to invite you to pray with us. And to pray with us in our work for the Church. At the end of your pews there is a holy card with a prayer for vocations in the Church. I invite you to say this prayer with us. The card features a priest from the Archdiocese, Father Tim DeCrane. He's now at Our Lady of the Greenwood.

For more than 150 years we have formed men like Father Tim to be priests here in Indiana, especially in the Archdiocese. Father Rick studied at Saint Meinrad in our college. Actually, this past week he was there at Saint Meinrad, giving a conference to our seminarians. Archbishop Thompson also studied at Saint Meinrad and so many of your priests in the Archdiocese. We have formed deacons and lay ministers. We have guided oblates of our Monastery. We offer retreats to people near and far. We form our youth, through the "One Bread, One Cup" conferences. Becky Ubelhor, who is the one who is helping with Children's Liturgy of the Word, she went through "One Bread, One Cup." I've known her

grandparents from my first parish assignment. I buried her grandfather. Her grandfather wrote to me every month when I was in seminary.

Mustard seed-sized faith. That little act of writing a letter to me for five years in the seminary, produces a priest.

Finally, I am here to invite you to consider prayerfully how you can help us in this work for the Church. This week you will receive in the mail a letter from Archabbot Kurt and more information about Saint Meinrad. I only ask that you look it over and respond as generously as you can.