

'FAITH THE SIZE OF A MUSTARD SEED' – HOMILY - 2 OCTOBER 2016

The Psalm response today tells us,

"If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts."

Not to harden our hearts, not to diminish our love for God and neighbour.

Not to be frozen. With open hearts we can grow.

The Gospel from Luke today says,

*"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.'*

If only our faith was the size of mustard seed, we could do wonders.

But who are we? We praying and working in accord with God's loving desire.

And whose wonders? God's wonders.

Compared to large-scale images, the size of a very small mustard seed brings us back to reality.
Faith and humility, not faith and grandeur.

Not dreaming how great will be our accomplishments, our success, our projects, our fame, our popularity.

But living in faith, humbly, we ask God, what does God want?

How can we help you, O God, though what we offer is so small?

A mustard seed has so much potential.

To grow and grow and shelter the birds of the air.

In two days, October 4th, we celebrate the 'FEAST OF ST. FRANCIS OF ASSISI'.

Before us, in our church today, is a copy of a very old painting.

There is a mural in Assisi of St Francis of Assisi preaching to the birds.

The birds are gathered before him, attentive.

The face of the friar behind him contrasts with the face and disposition of St Francis.

In France there is a similar painting with different colours and just one tree.

The copy before us is of the second.

St Francis knew that our hearts must not harden.

He was open to the many possibilities, surprises and promptings of God's Spirit.

Even to sharing the Good News of Jesus with the birds of the air.

If our faith were the size of a mustard seed,

We could see the beauty of the world around us,

We could share our experiences of such beauty with God,

We could be open to God directing us how to treasure the beauty of our world,

And we could follow God's prompts and actively care for our common home of planet earth.

The Gospel today goes on to say,

"Which of you, with a servant ploughing or minding sheep..."

For Jesus, the Good News includes Farmers and Pastoralists.

Two very different lifestyles, and, in some countries, still in traditional conflict with each other.

We need only think about our water wells projects in South Sudan,

Where one of our conditions before drilling, is that the community plants market gardens,

Rather than raid the farmers when times are tough.

The water wells are a way to be inclusive.

So too with our world today.

It is so easy to pretend and say that we can't make a difference:
Either because of conflicts in Iraq or Syria or Yemen or Nigeria.
Or with domestic violence and institutional abuse and poverty in Australia.

If our faith was the size of a mustard seed, we could make a difference,
We would want to make a difference.

The Second Reading today, in the Second Letter to Timothy, puts it this way,
*"Fan into a flame the gift that God gave you when I laid my hands on you.
God's gift was not a spirit of timidity, but the Spirit of power, and love, and self-control."*

When our faith is like a mustard seed growing into a tree that give shelter,
Or fanning the spark into a flame within us,
We make a difference.

Let us ask the children.

On October 6th we are invited to join with the children of Aleppo, Syria to pray for Peace.
To pray, not with a hardened heart, but with the open and simple hearts of children.
To pray that those adults with the hardened hearts for war, will turn around and work for peace.

With open hearts, we pray –

O GOD, HEAR THE PRAYER OF CHILDREN FOR PEACE

We thank you, loving God, for the beauty you gave:
The beauty of music, of silence, of a stream running,
Of a bird nesting, of children laughing.
And we ask why do adults take such beauty away?
Why replace such wonder with fear and bombs and bullets.

We so much need you, O God, to inspire Peace again.
We join with the children of Syria to pray for peace.
Across many faiths we pray for peace:
For the children of Syria and with the children of Syria.
We pray for Peace.

Hear the plea of children of Syria and of the world praying together,
For beauty and peace and laughter once more.
Help our adults to work for Peace.
O God, hear the prayer of children for peace. Amen.

[Fr. Gerry Hefferan – 'Faith the Size of a Mustard Seed' – 2 October 2016]

[Readings: <http://www.usccb.org/bible/readings/100216.cfm>]