

Increase Our Faith

Today the disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith. We might ask the same. I have come to believe that faith is not really so much about dogmas or doctrines and surely not about words of a creed or a catechism. I have come to believe, however, and it did take nearly these full eighty years, that faith is essentially about relationships, and that was what disciples' plea was all about. They wanted to know what their relationship with Jesus had to do with their relationships with others. That's why Jesus offers them the example servanthood! I believe our faith -- our relationship with Jesus -- is directly connected to how we relate to others!

Richard Rohr immediately tackles this very issue as the focus of his new book, *The Universal Christ*. He quotes in his introduction a passage from the autobiography of the twentieth century English mystic Caryl Houselander in which she relates an experience she had that led her to understand her faith in Jesus Christ.

I was in an underground train in which all sorts of people jostled together, sitting and strap-handling—workers of every description going home at the end of the day. Quite suddenly I saw with my mind, but as vividly as a wonderful picture, Christ in them all. But I saw more than that; not only was Christ in every one of them, living in them, dying in them, rejoicing in them, sorrowing in them—but because He was in them, and because they were here, the whole world was here too, here in this underground train; not only the world as it was at that moment, not only all the people in all countries of the world, but all those people who lived in the past, and all those yet to come.

I came out into the street and walked for a long time in the crowds. It was the same here, on every side, in every passer-by, everywhere—Christ.

I saw too the reverence everyone must have for a sinner; instead of condoning his sin, which is in reality his utmost sorrow, one must comfort Christ who is suffering in him. And this reverence must be paid even to those sinners whose souls seem to be dead, because it is Christ, who is the life of the soul, who is dead in them; they are His tombs, and Christ in the tomb is potentially the risen Christ....

Christ is everywhere; in Him every kind of life has a meaning and has influence on every other kind of life....Realization of our oneness in

Christ is the only cure for human loneliness. For me, too, it is the only ultimate meaning of life, the only thing that gives meaning and purpose to every life.

After a few days the “vision” faded. People looked the same again, there was no longer the same shock of insight for me each time I was face to face with another human being. Christ was hidden again; indeed, through the years to come I would seek for Him, and usually I would find him in others—and still more in myself—only through a deliberate and blind act of faith.

Hearing those profound words, we have every reason to join with the disciples of Jesus, in saying, “Lord, increase our faith!”

We gather here at the altar of Word and Sacrament to nourish that faith. We pray for the kind of faith that the prophet Habakkuk and Paul reveal to us today. Theirs is a faith experienced in uncertainty and even doubt, but that is alive, vibrant and flourishing, because it is full of the hope -- the faith and the love that is born of an intimate relationship with God in Christ Jesus. St. Paul urges us, even as we struggle, to be courageous in our faith, our relationship with God. He writes:

*...stir into flame
the gift of God...
the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus*

In the midst of uncertainty, even chaos, in our lives and in our world,
Habbakuk echoes God's promise:

*For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it,
it will surely come, it will not be late.*

We embrace their challenge and with the earliest disciples, each of us asks as did they, *Lord, increase my faith that I may be able to see you in others—and still more in myself—through a deliberate and blind act of faith.*