

**Blessed be God who animates our lives and plants in each of us the invisible seed of faith which renders us power and courage to be the stewards of creation which we are called to be. AMEN**

**In the passage read today from the Gospel of Luke Jesus turns to the disciples after they have witnessed his parables and admonitions about living a life of dropping everything and following Him. Their heads are swirling and their hearts while burning are also troubled. And so it is only natural that they turn to Jesus and ask him how to “increase” their faith...after all, Jesus has already said faith will make you well, faith is the key to the Kingdom, faith, faith faith...**

**And Jesus responds with the simile of the mustard seed, the smallest of seeds, which renders the grandest of shrubs!!! Faith is like that? So it must get bigger.**

**The thing is that it may not be about small and big except in the drama of contrast, that something so miniscule could render something so magnificent.**

**It may indeed be that in our incarnational and sacramental Christian way, the invisible becomes visible, the ordinary exposes the extraordinary, and the Word of God becomes flesh.**

**In simpler terms, faith is not a commodity, it is a gift, a grace. We cannot acquire it trade it or “increase” it ! We can live it and into it.**

**like the disciples, we often ask God the wrong question, and it is usually a question formed from our own insecurity or want or fear. we often fail to see what we have, in favor of wanting more. we fail to see enough, in favor of wanting bigger.**

**people like you and me, want to increase their faith when faith may be like pregnancy, you either have it or you don't. It may be like the oceans, tidal in ebbs and flows. Faith surges and swells. increase our faith assumes that faith is measureable increasable when like God godself, faith is the essence which drives all else, faith is the engine,**

**the energy, the combustion, the nucleus, which may cause amazing growth and fruit but which itself is invisible and invincible.**

**there are many definitions of faith: “When you walk to the edge of all the light you have and take that first step into the darkness of the unknown, faith tells us that one of two things will happen. There will be something solid for you to stand upon or you will be taught to fly.”  
— Patrick Overton,**

**Faith is the assurance of things hoped for; the evidence of things not seen from Hebrews**

**Faith in the dictionary is “complete” trust in someone or something like God...note the word complete...faith is already made whole, already full, we have but to realize it, recognize it.**

**Faith of the Gospel stories makes us well, moves mountains, carries us to liberation. It is the unbreakable sparking thread which connects us to the Divine. It is in us and for us and for all creation.**

**faith is more than belief, it is more than creedal, it is more than trust. Faith is more accurately described with adjectives like steadfast, deep, true, unflinching, devoted, unyielding, firm  
It is more like an ocean or a foundation or a nucleus...or as here, a tiny seed which can grow amazing creative goodness!**

**Jesus does not rebuke the disciples for misunderstanding the nature of faith or from whence it comes; he once again offers stimulating similes and metaphors**

**when Jesus answers his disciples question, he doesn't say that is not the right question, he doesn't scold them; he may be very affirming of their faith, after all they have dropped their nets to follow him. instead he tells them two stories of the consequences of faith, holy consequences which are at once hopeful and humbling. He is encouraging the fruits of faith.**

**hopeful: something so tiny can grow so huge. the largesse of the mustard tree comes from the tiniest of seeds. the vastness of Gods mercy comes from the tiniest of faith**

**humbling in that faith somehow resides in our essence, tiny and obscure, we must empty ourselves of obstructions to realizing the power of faith and when we do we become the servant leaders which Jesus encourages us to be, the disciples and apostles which witness faith and its works. Jesus of eternal faith came to serve that we might also.**

**This orientation of hope and humility which are the holy consequences of faith is nowhere better exemplified than in the life and prayer of St Francis in whose name we bless the animals today.**

**St Francis Francis of Assisi is the patron saint of ecology, animals, non-violence, and peacemaking—because he understood that the entire circle of life has a Great Lover at the center of it all. In Francis’ world, the sun, moon, animals, plants, and elements are all shown reverence and even personal subjectivity as “brother” and “sister.” He refused to exclude anything. He went to the edge, to the bottom; he kissed the leper, he loved the poor, he wore patches on the outside of his habit so everybody would know that’s what he was like on the inside. He didn’t hide from his shadow. He wasn’t an intellectual; he didn’t begin with universal philosophies and ideas and abstractions. For Francis, there was one world and it was all sacred.**

**In many ways St Francis’ life and principles were a response to the disciples question in Luke. When they asked for a quantitative answer, Jesus and Francis gave a mystical, qualitative one. When Christian leaders started counting, Francis stopped counting. He moved from the common economy of merit to the scary and wondrous economy of grace, where God does not do any counting, but only gives unreservedly.**

Surges of Faith  
The Rev. Dr. Martha Tucker  
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**St Francis' biographers have described not only the steadfastness of his faith but also the surges, those moments when faith caused righteous action, prophetic voice, social justice movement.**

**So let us close by turning to page 833 in the Book of Common Prayer and praying this together. I invite us to pray together:**

**Lord, make us instruments of your peace. Where there is hatred, let us sow love; where there is injury, pardon; where there is discord, union; where there is doubt, faith; where there is despair, hope; where there is darkness, light; where there is sadness, joy. Grant that we may not so much seek to be consoled as to console; to be understood as to understand; to be loved as to love. For it is in giving that we receive; it is in pardoning that we are pardoned; and it is in dying that we are born to eternal life. Amen.**