

## Sunday 2<sup>nd</sup> October 2022

My dear brothers and sisters, I pray that today's homily may inspire us to selflessly serve God and our Neighbours. Before reflecting on Today's gospel, have you ever wondered why the Palestinian Jews two thousand years ago tended to exaggerate when they spoke? So, it was natural that Jesus would, too. Well, despite what Jesus says, anyone who wants to move a sycamore to the Sea should use a chain saw, a crane and a heavy-duty truck instead of prayer. With this in mind, now, let us reflect shortly on the topic below:

### " Increase Our Faith"

If flying sycamores are examples of Palestinian exaggeration, can we write off Jesus' words and look for more "truthful" passages? No, if Jesus exaggerated, it was because he wanted to make an impression, wanted folks to pay attention to what he said. So, what about using a mustard seed to move a sycamore? What can it possibly mean? The disciples ask Jesus to do something we, too, ask: "increase our faith." We see the horrors of the world around us and wonder if there really could be a God who cares. Our cultures are increasingly becoming "post religious," with decisions in the political, social and economic realms made without reference to any beliefs at all. Some said that the rise of fundamentalism among Christians, Muslims, Hindus and others is a last gasp by panicked believers who see impending doom for their beliefs. But, is the situation really all that new? Habakkuk faced the same problems some 2500 years ago. It never has been easy to believe. It never will be. So, we pray, "Increase My Faith!"

Jesus' answer is not comforting. if you had faith the size of mustard seed, well, it seems that my faith is not even so big as such a small seed, because it doesn't suffice. I don't even want to shake, let alone move sycamores, I only want my heart to be moved. That shouldn't be harder than fling trees into the ocean. Perhaps Jesus is telling us that it is not the problem of amount. Perhaps we already have enough faith. A mustard seed's worth suffices. So, perhaps we need not asked for an increased faith. There is something else needed to make us feel that our faith is alive. That may be the reason Luke link Jesus' words about faith with admonition about service Faith is not something we hold on to like a pocketful of seeds, something that can be increased by mere asking. Faith is a form of service to God and Neighbour.

The amount of faith is not important - a mustard seeds worth suffices. What matters is what we do with that faith, whether it be as small as a mustard seed or as big as a coconut. Worrying about my faith is self-centred. It's as if faith existed for me and an increase in it increased my spiritual capital. My faith, however, is supposed to be other- centred. That is, it should be directed towards God and my Neighbour, and my only concern should be whether God or our Neighbour is indeed getting a mustard seed's worth of service from me. That is the reason we are told, "When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, we are useless servants. We have done no more than our duty." Ironically, concern with the depth or breadth of my faith can interfere with my being a slave of duty. I can spend so much time waiting, praying, meditating and contemplating to increase my faith that my mustard seed dries up and dies without bearing any fruit. Or, I can be ready all the time to respond to the call of God, my master. Even when i think i may have done, i should be ready and willing to do more. And, more will come. People and situation will always appear that will need a response from this servant of God. The more I respond the more opportunities for service will open up to me.

An interesting thing will happen as I am busy with this loving service of God and Neighbour. My mustard seed will sprout and grow without my even noticing it, bearing more mustard seeds that will spread around. So long as I concentrate upon service instead of my mustard seed faith, it will grow bigger than a sycamore.

With the above reflection in mind, may this coming week bring us peace and God's protection as we render our service to God and our Neighbour. And may the intercession our Blessed mother Mary accompany you and your families, both now and forever, Amen.

Yours Affectionately,  
Father Nicholas Nwanzi.