The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith." The Lord replied, "If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you. "Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, 'Come here immediately and take your place at table'? Would he not rather say to him, 'Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished'? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.'" 

Many of us have had the experience of driving on a highway and passing a semitrailer loaded with a mobile home. We have the ability to build a house and then move it to wherever we want it. A few years ago a three-story, century-old brick building on the campus of Saint John's University was hoisted up, loaded onto trailers, and moved to another part of campus. What an awesome sight! This stalwart building was picked up and moved- rather quickly, with seemingly little effort. We now have the hydraulics knowledge and enough power to practically move mountains if we want. Move a mulberry tree? No problem! When Jesus in the gospel suggests that a little bit of faith can move a mulberry tree, he's not suggesting that we hire hydraulic equipment! He's suggesting that we recognize that the power to be faithful disciples is not found in "how much" but in how obedient we are to responsibility.

The apostles' request of Jesus to "increase [their] faith" is made in the face of the seemingly impossible demands of discipleship. The issue is to take what we have- whether little or great- and act. If we wait until we think we have enough faith, we will never act. In the first example about the mulberry tree Jesus is saying that even a little faith is enough to move this tree. The point about faith that Jesus makes is not that it be measured; active and fruitful faith...
is not a matter of "how much." But we must use what we do have, because even a little bit gives us great power to accomplish God's work. This is the great encouragement of the gospel. We have enough to be faithful disciples. We must have faith in who we are: God's servants empowered to carry on Jesus' saving mission.

Though the apostles ask Jesus to "increase [their] faith," what he gives them instead is greater confidence in the power of the faith they already have. What is this faith? It is obedience to responsibility, a matter of willingness to undertake decisive action for the sake of God's kingdom. Even faith that "feels" small possesses great power.

LIVING THE PASchal MYSTERY
When we think of people of great faith, we often mention people like Ghandi or Mother Teresa. These were great religious leaders who obviously had great faith and accomplished great things. We make a mistake, however, if we identify faith only with doing great things. Jesus reminds us in this gospel that our everyday actions, performed in loving service, are expressions of our faith. The faith-filled person puts in an honest day's work. That person is gracious to those they encounter. That person is ready to reach out and help another even beyond one's own workload. The faith-filled person sees Jesus in the other and responds to the situation with Jesus' love and care. Faith is obedience to responsibility. It is obedience to discipleship. It is obedience to our Master who encourages us, helps us, never abandons us.

FOCUSING THE GOSPEL
Key words and phrases: Increase our faith, did what was commanded
To the point: In this Sunday's gospel the apostles ask Jesus to "increase [their] faith." What he gives them instead is greater confidence in the power of the faith they already have. What is this faith? It is obedience to responsibility, a matter of willingness to undertake decisive action for the sake of God's kingdom. Even faith that "feels" small possesses great power.

CONNECTING THE GOSPEL
to the first reading: Habakkuk laments because he is faced with so much violence and evil. God, however, has a longer view of history—these immediate events do not tell the full story of God's saving vision. Whereas Jesus describes the responsibility of faith, Habakkuk describes where our faith leads: "the just one...shall live."

to our experience: We sometimes think people of great faith are those who do big things for God and church. Faith is as readily expressed in simple acts of everyday service.

HOMILY POINTS
• What "mulberry trees" need to be moved in our lives? These "mulberry trees" are whatever big things seem insurmountable to us. Some examples might be overcoming our fear of reconciling with another who has hurt us deeply, dealing with some addiction, feeding the world's hungers, establishing lasting world peace, having patience with a teenager who seems to be choosing the wrong path. We tend to labor under the misconception that we can deal successfully with these issues if we only have more faith. Jesus tells us, however, that even the smallest bit of faith gives us the power to tackle whatever challenges life brings.

• Faith is measured not by problem solving but by being obedient servants of God. This faith enables us to move beyond our own limited vision and embrace instead God's vision of how the world is to be—a world free of violence, misery, strife, and discord. Moreover, God promises us that this vision will "surely come" to fulfillment.

• What holds us back from the task of moving" mulberry trees"? It may be that we lack confidence in our own power. Or maybe that we insist on doing the job alone. Or that, despite our problems with where the tree stands, we are comfortable with the fact that it's always been there. Jesus calls us to faith in who we are: God's servants empowered to make a difference in the world because God makes a difference in us.

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