

Last week, Sunday night through Wednesday morning, was the bi-annual Priest's Assembly for all the active priests in the Diocese of Saginaw. You might have read a little about it in my monthly bulletin inserts ... where I asked for your prayers as the priests got together up north for this important meeting.

On my way up I-75, I ended up running out of gas just north of Grayling. I drove past probably half a dozen gas stations and kept thinking - I'll stop at the next one ... but eventually, my truck pattered to a stop.

Luckily, I have OnStar™, so I just pushed the button and in about half-an-hour somebody showed up with a couple of gallons of gas, and I was on my way ... at least for a little bit. I did make a point to stop at the very next gas station to fill the tank all the way up; since two gallons wasn't going to get me very far.

In today's Gospel, the apostles ask Jesus to "*increase [their] faith.*"

But this request to increase their faith ... to top off their spiritual gas tanks ... is not met with an easy answer. Jesus doesn't just say "Sure, guys! Here you go!" And on their way they go.

Rather, Jesus points out that faith is power ... and faith is power-ful.

Then he tells them a parable which is a bit cryptic at first.

Considering Faith, the Catechism tells us that,

Faith is the theological virtue by which we believe in God and believe all that he has said and revealed to us, and that Holy Church proposes for our belief, because he is truth itself.

Faith, as well, is a gift from God ... a supernatural virtue ... which we receive from God. In Baptism, we received Faith, Hope, and Love - the three theological or supernatural virtues ... and for the rest of our lives ... all through our spiritual lives ... we are met with ups and downs.

All of the Sacraments ... most especially the Eucharist ... strengthen us spiritually ... refreshing our souls in Faith, Hope, and Love. We come to this altar to receive a "refill" ... to get us through the next week.

But, Faith demands a response.

The servants in the parable were doing what they were commanded ... but they were doing everything with the resources provided them by their master. And if that's all they did ... then they are being honest when they say that they are “unprofitable servants.”

In our case, if all we do with this gift of Faith is make it from one week to the next week ... well ... then we need to reflect on how we may ... or may not ... be responding appropriately to God's gift of Faith in our lives.

St. Paul, in his Second Letter to Timothy reminds him:

*to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have*

Because this gift ... this “*faith*” ... this “*power and love*” ... is a “*strength that comes from God*” allowing us to “*bear our share ... for the gospel.*”

Of course, this isn't easy. It requires real work. Faith requires faithfulness ... we must persevere through the times that test our faith ... times that can leave us crying out with the Prophet Habakuk:

*How long, O LORD? I cry for help
but you do not listen!*

But. God. is. listening.

It is up to us to “*press on to fulfillment*” ... And ... it is up to us to trust that God “*will not disappoint.*”

As we approach this altar to receive the Sacred Body and Blood, Soul and Divinity of Jesus Christ – let us ask God ... let us ask Jesus ... to increase our Faith ... and along with that pray as well for an increase in Hope and in Love. But let us also ask for “*the help of the Holy Spirit ... the Holy Spirit that dwells within us*” ... so that we might better respond to these supernatural gifts ... stirring them into flame ... in ways that will profit us spiritually ... and be of service to those around us.

May our prayers for each other ... today ... help us to persevere in Faith, Hope, and Love ... and as we go forth from this place ... let us build up the Kingdom of God in our world.