

- *So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them. He was amazed at their lack of faith.*
  - I don't often think about the "limits" of God, of Jesus NOT being able to heal someone. Can't God do anything, let alone everything?
  - The answer is, "No. God can't." Perhaps it's better to say, "God won't." God refuses to intrude, to come uninvited, to overwhelm us, or impose on the freedom given us. Our Gospel makes perfectly and horrifyingly clear that God is limited by the smallness of our faith.
  - Jesus can't work miracles because the people won't believe. They're distracted by the ordinariness of the Messenger, distracted by the way God comes, by the fact that He's so close.
  - Imagine that, they are a community of people and god is RIGHT THERE in their midst. There are some sick people, some who are struggling, some who feel alone and despairing. Some are struggling financially, others worried about their kids or their elderly parents. There are the synagogue so they believe in God, they just don't recognize God, right there, waiting to help.
  - It's the same for us often, isn't it? I miss God especially when I feel alone or abandoned. I get distracted in the difficult moments when I am filled with worry and fear, the weight of the world on my shoulders, and in the ordinary moments as well when I am too busy, too rushed too disconnected.

- I get distracted when the answer God gives me is not the one I want, I get disappointed when something other than what I had hoped comes from my prayer and my efforts. It's rather disconcerting when I think about it.
  
- However, as we heard just three weeks ago, with even the smallest amount of faith, faith the size of mustard seed, with the slightest invitation from us, even offered imperfectly and with hesitation, God will come and do wondrous deeds in and for and through us.
  - Don't think it's possible? Look at Saint Paul who we heard in our second reading?
  - With faith, even our weaknesses and the challenges we face can become opportunities for God to be at work, not only in and for US but through us for others.
- OK, you're saying but Paul's an Apostle. It doesn't happen anymore does it? Actually it does.
  - On October 14, Pope Francis will canonize Archbishop Oscar Romero, Archbishop of San Salvador from 1977 to 1980, one of the most troubled and violent times for that central American nation, ruled by dictators and military regimes.
    - Originally Romero was approved as Archbishop by the ruling junta only because he was thought to be a "yes" man who they could control. But, when Archbishop Romero saw the suffering of his people, his faith deepened, he struggled and grew in his relationship with the Lord.

- As his faith deepened, it guided his life more and more. He allowed himself to be changed by God and became a prophet for those who were poor, persecuted, suffering and in need.
- So deep was his faith, so effective his message that they tried to silence his voice, assassinating him while he celebrating Mass.
- Certainly it's not only men who have been used by God because their faith allowed God to work miracles.
  - I think immediately of Mother Teresa who, even as she struggled in her prayer, in her relationship with Jesus, she allowed herself to be stretched. And God did great things through her, even though she didn't "feel" close to God.
  - I think of Dr. Gianna Molla, pediatrician, wife and mother who gave up her life in 1962 rather than sacrifice her unborn child.
  - Not all people of deep faith have yet been recognized or canonized either. I think of the four nuns who were killed in El Salvador about the same time as Archbishop Romero, merely for assisting the migrants and farmers.
  - On the other end of things, I think of my grandmother and her simple faith that informed and enflamed everything she did. And she did everything with gentleness and kindness, But don't cross her!

- There is the temptation though, to write these off, saying, “Well, I just don’t have that kind of faith and that’s that.”
  - But these people weren’t born saints, they simply allowed their faith to deepen, their love for Jesus to grow, their service to others paramount.
  - These are men and women of our own day, little different from us in terms of how the world judges.
  - Through God’s grace, and their efforts, they allowed God to work miracles through them that Jesus couldn’t in Nazareth.
  - And we can do that as well.
  
- It is very, very simple but it is far, far from easy.
  - Simply put to grow our faith, we need to draw closer to God.
  - We need to move beyond our distractions no matter how often and how strongly they come, including our own selfishness, sinfulness, laziness, weakness, and busy-ness
  - And we can only do this with God’s grace and by going beyond ourselves, helping those in need, spending time with Jesus in prayer, reaching out to others, reading God’s word in sacred scripture, being nourished with the Eucharist.
  - “Oh no, Father Rob!” you’re thinking. “I’ve already tried all that and it hasn’t worked! I can’t pray because my mind wanders. I don’t understand scripture. I have barely enough time for my own family, let alone to help anyone else. It’s not that simple. It hasn’t worked.”

- And I say that it has not worked YET. It will not happen overnight and it will not come easily.
  - Sometimes, when I'm in a funk, the only thing that can bring me out of it is to help someone else, not merely to see someone worse off than me, but to take me beyond my own struggles.
  - Read sacred scripture, not for the "Church" says, or the priest said in the homily, but for what God is saying to you, right here, right now, where you are and for what you need. God's Word is alive, and effective.
  - Reach out to someone, even if it's only to call someone who's lonely or to offer a smile. I was at the movies the other day and the young girl was running around trying to make everybody happy. (Alright! It was at the concession stand!)
- In a world of few guarantees, though, this is one I can make. You keep at it, you continue to do these simple things, with an openness to God, God will come. God will deepen your faith, strengthen your hope, use the power of love through you.
- It's not that God will give us a million dollars (although, if God does, make sure to tithe!), cure cancer, or end discrimination on it's own, but God will work in and for and through us to do far more than we could on our own, in fact, immeasurably more than we could even hope for, let alone imagine.
- We need only have faith.