

# ***Fourth Sunday of Advent – Increasing Faith***

*Delivered by Rev. Fr. Ghevond Ajamian  
St. Sarkis Armenian Church. Carrollton, TX  
December 18, 2016  
Gospel Reading: Luke 17:1-10*

In the name of the Father and the Son and the Holy Spirit. Amen.

In today's Gospel reading, Christ tells His disciples that troubles will come and the need for forgiveness in this world. Interestingly, after these words, the disciples ask Christ, "Increase our faith" (Luke 17:5) and Jesus' response is just as interesting, rather than giving them the answer of how to increase their faith, He merely says, "If you had faith the size of mustard seed, you could say to this fig tree, 'Uproot and plant yourself in the sea' and it would obey you" (Luke 17:6). Faith is a unique and great tool Christians have because through faith, we can uproot trees, move mountains, heal the sick, encourage the timid and give life to the dead.

We all need to increase our faith, but how do we do that? There are three ways in particular:

First, we increase our faith by learning and increasing our knowledge. Not just reading the Bible or the early Church Fathers or listening to sermons, but through reading and studying general knowledge. When we learn more about astronomy, biology, chemistry, mathematics, language, health, and many other subjects, we increase our faith because we see God and His fingerprint in everything.

Second, we increase our faith by seeing another's faith. When we see another stand up for his or her Christian faith or explain it to another, we are encouraged and feel justified in our own faith. Sometimes another can put into words that which we cannot put into words.

Third, we increase our faith through suffering. When we suffer for Christ and see others suffer for their faith, we grow stronger in our faith and increase it. Last week, in Cairo, Egypt, faithful Christian Copts went to church to worship Christ at the Divine Liturgy. During the Divine Liturgy, a terrorist bombed the church killing 25 people. The terrorists thought they could chase away the Christians and prevent them from coming back, but the opposite happened – one or two days later, hundreds and thousands of Christians gathered in front of the bombed church and recited, in the streets, the Nicene Creed for all the world to hear.

Christian faith is unlike any other faith. When the world tries to eradicate it, it grows and multiplies. All of Christian history is full of stories like this, when the faithful were persecuted and onlookers witnessed the immense strength of Christians and converted by the hundreds and thousands. We see this in the stories of ancient Rome, the Arab invasions and even during the Armenian Genocide.

One of the early Church Fathers, Tertullian said, “The seed of the Church is the blood of the martyrs”. This seed which Tertullian speaks of is the same seed which Christ speaks of in today’s Gospel reading. A seed may look small and weak, but it has life and power within it. We have life in each of us if we have faith. This is why Christ says, “Unless a grain of wheat falls into the ground and dies it remains alone, but if it dies, it bears much fruit” (John 12:24). We as Christians must die to this world in order to truly live. We must die to what this world thinks of us, die to what this world wants from us and die to what this world says and does to us. Dying to the world is the ultimate way to live and bear fruit.

When we increase our knowledge, witness others’ faith and even suffer for our own faith, then we will increase our faith and produce an even great and stronger faith than we possibly can have now. It is my prayer in this Christmas season and the year to come, that we look at our faith, knowing that it is small, and try to increase our faith. For through increasing our faith, we will be able to perform miracles greater than Christ performed (John 14:12) and will be able to move trees, move mountains and move the heart of everyone we come in contact with.

Amen.