

"Great things come in small packages" was a favorite saying of a friend of mine who was 5'4" and 100 lbs. dripping wet. Sometimes we find ourselves believing that "bigger is always better." Europeans have long laughed at our fetishes for large cars, large homes and large meals. I can still remember, Flora, our Hungarian exchange student from a few years back who asked me why I felt like I had to make such huge hamburgers. I actually thought I was making them on the small side and was contemplating having two of them myself. "Super-Size Me!" was even a pretty famous documentary on the gigantic portions we Americans eat at fast food restaurants, although many of the fast food places have been cutting back on the size under the heat of a more health conscious public.

Jesus, however, makes it clear in the Gospel according to Mark that great things do indeed come in small packages. Bigger is not better when it comes to our diet, that isto say that eating 10,000 calorie lunches at the fast food restaurant is not God's will for us, but bigger is always better when it comes to faith. And faith, something without weight or volume, makes a greater difference in our lives than anything else we encounter. The bigger the faith, the better.

We get it all backwards when it comes to faith. Sometimes I hear people calling a Baptism, a Christening. A Christening is a naming ceremony before we launch something into the world. We Christen ships. We baptize babies. We are not naming a baby and launching him into the world. In fact, and this

is the part we get backwards, we do almost nothing when it comes to Baptism. We are onlookers as God works through water and His Word to convert a heathen soul and make it his forever. At that moment, when I pour the water over the baby's head saying, "I baptize you in the name of the Father and of the Son and of the Holy Spirit," that baby is transformed from a child of Satan to a child of God. He is fully and completely saved. The mustard seed has been planted and grown into a giant and miraculous faith right before our eyes. God can work this miracle even through this sinful preacher using that tiny little Baptismal Font. It reminds me of the movie "Aladdin," where the genie describes himself as having "phenomenal cosmic powers in an itty bitty living space."

We don't christen the baby and then hope he grows a faith. We baptize the baby and watch God create full and perfect faith right before our eyes and then we spend the rest of our days trying to keep that voracious faith nourished and exercised. That's why we send parents materials for teaching their children right from Baptism. We start teaching them in Sunday School from age 2. My only requirement for Baptism is that the parents promise me to have the child in worship every week or as often as possible. God does not create a wimpy faith and if you don't keep that faith fed through his word, it will wither. Baptism is a great example of a great thing that comes in a little package but when it comes to faith, bigger is better so we take that faith that God creates and try to help it grow bigger and bigger.

I have a plant in my office that just barely survives. I think it needs repotting and feeding but I just never have time to tend to its needs. I water

it, so it hangs on, but it is far from what it once was. And it's probably pretty far from what it could be. Don't let your faith or the faith of our children live like my plant, root bound and hungry. Do you know that the national average across Christianity is 2 out of every 20 children who are baptized will grow up to be involved adult members of a congregation. 10%. That means that 90% of all the children baptized will eventually starve their faith and wander off or at best live a life with withered faith that has little strength to help them through the difficult times in life. I hope and pray that our percentage is better than that but I'm certain that it is not what it could be. We have about 500 baptized members here. On any given Sunday, there are about 75 of them who cannot be here to feed their faith, people who are in the Armed Forces, the hospital, away at school or in nursing homes. Another 150 are here nourishing their faith. That leaves 275 people who are part of this family who are intentionally letting their faith go hungry. That is not acceptable to me. In any given week I expect that some people are going to be sick, some traveling somewhere and some who have to work the whole weekend. Let's say 10% or another 50. That still leaves 225 people who are intentionally going hungry.

If half of your family at home quit eating, would it concern you? Feed your faith with Word and Sacrament and watch and see it grow into the most amazing thing you have ever seen. People who are not here are cheating themselves out of having that happen for them. The people who we know who are intentionally starving their faith are our easiest mission field. Many of them just need some encouragement to come and eat from someone who loves

them. And I don't mean a snide comment at dinner. I mean an honest, loving attempt to get them to come and eat.

Remember that salvation is a switch. Either one is saved or he is not. No one is almost saved. But that being said, the quality of life we live on earth until we receive our eternal reward is largely governed by faith. Faith gives us joy, hope and strength to endure the hardships of this world. If we want a life of joy and fulfillment, we feed our faith with Word and Sacrament. Money won't satisfy us. Fame won't satisfy us. Sex and drugs won't satisfy us. And extra sleep on Sunday morning will not satisfy us. Only God satisfies and he does that by strengthening faith. So come to this place every week, bring everyone you can drag with you and walk through the doors, look to heaven and say,

"Lord. I'm here! Supersize me!"