

Mom and Dad are so serious about today's baptism that they even have a theme.

Aaron and Liz Chmiel will be hosting a baptismal afterparty and honoring their triplets' godparents using the organizing image of a compass.

It's too bad they weren't around when Jesus was trying to teach his apostles; he could have used their help.

Jesus has been trying to reorient them, to point them in a new direction, to turn their focus from selectivity to welcome, from judgment to forgiveness, from obstacles to embrace.

The lesson is going south.

The apostles realize that pointing their own practice in the direction of God's grace has them in over their heads, so they ask Jesus: *increase our faith*.

It's the kind of request we might make for the baptized, the triplets splashed with promise today as well as the rest of us.

But even with this request Jesus has to redirect and reposition them, and us.

For one thing, it approaches faith the wrong way.

The disciples might as well be modern Americans, assuming that faith is a commodity, and they need more.

It's like security or money or business or prestige or influence or anything else...they have some, but not enough, so how do they get more?

*Increase our faith*, Lord, because Bigger is Better and the answer to what we need is always More.

That's the way our internal American compass points, of course, and when our economy goes south and Hummer goes out of business, we assume it's bad and then angle for the return of blessed increase.

But faith is not a commodity, a thing to acquire and build up, but an orientation, a direction, a way of organizing and steering our life.

And Jesus thinks that the apostles, and we, have enough faith already--if anything, we need a new compass to direct it.

The translators chose to render his statement *If you had faith...*, but the Greek says *If you have faith*, and the word *if* can also mean *because*.

*Because you have faith* is a lot different than *if you had*.

Why do we disciples assume that we don't have enough faith, that somehow we need more than we have?

Is it because we are bombarded with the toxic air of a society and an economy built precariously on the perpetual lie that we don't ever have enough?

It's a timely question for us at Resurrection as we enter into a season of emphasis on financial stewardship leading to the reception of pledges for annual offerings and additional gifts to our capital campaign.

We are programmed to assume, whether as individuals or as a community, that we don't have enough.

*Lord, increase our resources!*

And we assume faith is one of them.

But the truth is, we do have enough, even if it looks too tiny to amount to anything.

We just have to point what we already have in the right direction, using our faith as our

compass.

Because we have faith the size of something too small to see, we can do things totally differently and completely contrary to assumptions about how things are supposed to be, like telling a mulberry tree where to go plant itself.

Because we have even microscopic faith, we have ample capacity to think of ourselves in completely new and liberating ways, like as children of God or as obedient slaves just doing our job.

Instead of being enslaved to recognition, we can check the compass again and be enslaved to the needs and desires of a different and more gracious master than our anxious, greedy egos.

Instead of expecting to be thanked and setting ourselves up for disappointment, we can savor contentment with what we do and what we have.

This shifts our focus from ourselves to our God, and that is charting a new course indeed.

When we do this, we realize that we don't really possess anything.

Our money, our time, our life, our breath, our health, our home, our everything is owned and held by God and for now entrusted to us to manage well.

Even our faith isn't our own...it is given to us, passed down to us from Lois and Eunice, from our grandmothers and mothers and fathers, from the saints and generations who have gone before us, and it won't do us any good after we die either, so instead of wishing for more, we share whatever faith we do have.

We keep passing it along as a gift to Noah and Quinn and Ian and the Sunday School songbirds, the children in our stewardship, and we teach them to share it with others around and after them.

When we do this, by the way, our faith grows from seed to garden, from self to community, and our initial, slightly misguided prayer for an increase in faith also comes true.

And we realize that we do have more than enough.

And faith is just part of the gift.

Life and love and joy and possibility and daily bread... it is all gift, and because it is gift, we can only spoil it by hoarding and grabbing for more.

Jesus is trying to teach us to open our hands and our hearts and our lives just like a seed has to open its husk to grow, like a Savior has to open his arms and his skin to die.

It's a dangerous and necessary death that leads to life, the way of the seed, the way of the cross, the way of the Christ who shares everything and now holds everything.

The one who died a disgrace and descended into hell is true north, the worrisome but wondrous direction in which we point the baptized.

Those of us transplanted in the baptismal water probably look completely absurd and out of place to a world addicted to recognition and starved by fears of scarcity and death.

So it is easy for us to lose our way.

Thank God for Ian, and Quinn, and Noah.

Watch the way they trust their parents.

Look at the way they delight in a world around them over which they exercise no control. Study the way they let themselves be nourished and held, as if it will be enough.

These tiny seedlings are teaching us faith.

They are pointing us in the right direction.

They are God's gift to us, a compass to show us the way.