

5. July 2021

## “Growing in faith”

**Mt 9:18-26**

*'While Jesus was speaking to them, suddenly one of the officials came up, who bowed low in front of him and said, 'My daughter has just died, but come and lay your hand on her and her life will be saved.' Jesus rose and, with his disciples, followed him. Then suddenly from behind him came a woman, who had been suffering from a haemorrhage for twelve years, and she touched the fringe of his cloak, for she was thinking, 'If only I can touch his cloak I shall be saved.' Jesus turned round and saw her; and he said to her, 'Courage, my daughter, your faith has saved you.' And from that moment the woman was saved. When Jesus reached the official's house and saw the flute-players, with the crowd making a commotion, he said, 'Get out of here; the little girl is not dead; she is asleep.' And they ridiculed him. But when the people had been turned out he went inside and took her by the hand; and she stood up. And the news of this spread all round the countryside.'*

Today's Gospel presents us wonderful testimonies of faith. We meet people who hold on existentially to Jesus, and receive from him what they asked for. The magistrate was suffering from the loss of his beloved daughter; the haemorrhagic woman was tormented by a long-standing illness. Both are cases in which there seems to be no hope left. As for Jairus' daughter, from the human perspective death is an irreversible reality; as for the haemorrhagic woman, she had already sought help everywhere, but no one could find the right remedy.

But the encounter with Jesus awakens hope in them, believing that He could change the desperate situation in which they found themselves, and, in faith, they both took advantage of the hour of grace.

Since the Scriptures are also given to us for an instructive purpose, these examples not only show us the wonderful action of Jesus, but also invite us to imitate the faith of the magistrate and the hemorrhagic woman, and to approach the Lord with the same confidence as they did. Is our faith as strong? Do we believe that Jesus can intervene in situations that seem impossible to us? And an even more important question: How can we come to have such a strong faith?

The disciples themselves, although they spent a lot of time with Jesus and saw with their own eyes the miracles he performed, asked him on another occasion to increase their faith (*cf. Lk 17:5*). Let us also remember that the Lord had to rebuke them repeatedly for their lack of faith (*cf. Mt 8:26; 17:17; 14:31*).

One of the reasons why we might find it hard to believe is that, when we experience God's power, we do not internalise it sufficiently, so that such experiences quickly fall into oblivion. When the disciples were beginning to worry because they remembered that they had no bread for their sustenance, Jesus had to remind them of the multiplication of the loaves that He had worked shortly before (*cf. Mk 8:13-21*).

Perhaps we have often experienced how God answered our prayers; but we easily forget these experiences when we are absorbed in a new difficult situation that threatens us. That is why it is important that we receive with gratitude whatever God, in his goodness, grants us, and that we remember it frequently. God's care for us is constant. The miraculous healings reported in the Gospel are like great lights that remind us of this reality and show God's love for us.

True faith transforms our inner self, for we no longer live within the limitations of our human experiences and reflections; rather, faith actualises God's presence in every moment. If we look at every event in the light of faith, then everything acquires its true meaning, for nothing happens without God's knowledge and permission.

This faith also implies that in seemingly impossible situations we place our hope in God. In this way, we detach ourselves from ourselves and abandon ourselves solely and totally to God. The Lord loves it when we trust in Him unconditionally! With this attitude, we enter into reality as it is, as far as this is possible for us in this life.

In order for our faith to grow, in addition to internalising our own experiences with the Lord and the testimonies offered to us by the Holy Scriptures or the lives of others, it is necessary to pray intensely. We can ask the Lord for a great and strong faith, especially in those moments when we notice our lack of faith and are in danger of giving in to inner doubts and insecurities. The Lord will be pleased with such a plea, and if we are insistent in our request, He will certainly strengthen our faith.

Another key to growing in faith is to make concrete acts of faith. There are many situations in our lives that we cannot deal with simply by human means. These can also be small things. At such times we decide to make an act of faith.

For example, let us suppose that, although we have done everything in our power, we feel insecure about an exam we have to take or some other similar situation. At such moments, let us do a concrete act and trust that the Lord will help us. Let us look to Him instead of looking at our insecurity. Acts like these will help us to grow daily in faith.