

30. June 2023

“I am willing”

Mt 8:1-4

After Jesus had come down from the mountain large crowds followed him. Suddenly a man with a virulent skin-disease came up and bowed low in front of him, saying, 'Lord, if you are willing, you can cleanse me.' Jesus stretched out his hand and touched him saying, 'I am willing. Be cleansed.' And his skin-disease was cleansed at once. Then Jesus said to him, 'Mind you tell no one, but go and show yourself to the priest and make the offering prescribed by Moses, as evidence to them.'

The faith of the leper unleashes the Lord's compassion and desire to save. This is a truth that we should deeply assimilate. The Lord wants to heal; the Lord wants to save; the Lord wants to call all men into the Kingdom of His Father; the Lord wants to cleanse every man of his leprosy, whether bodily or spiritual. *"I am willing,"* Jesus says to the leper, *"be cleansed."*

So, it all depends on our faith. Again and again the Lord reminds us of this - so many parts of Holy Scripture speak of the importance of faith! So we should ask ourselves: How can we increase our faith, how can it become so great that the Lord is able to work all that He wants?

On the one hand, we should pray with perseverance for our faith to grow, like the disciples who asked the Lord: *"Increase our faith"* (Lk 17,5). A further point to strengthen our faith is to meditate on all that God has already worked in us and for us: how often He has intervened in our lives; how often our prayers have been heard; from how many dangers He has preserved us; how faithfully He has sustained us in difficult crises!

Another fundamental point for growing in faith is gratitude. It is not enough to remember what the Lord has done for us, although this too is important and we often forget it. But it is only by giving thanks for what we have received that we can become aware of the reality in its full dimension. In this context, it is worth remembering that Gospel passage which tells us that only one of the ten lepers whom the Lord had cured returned to give glory to God (cf. Lk 17:11-19).

Each experience with God, if we understand it correctly, serves to deepen our faith, because each one of them teaches us how He cares for us, mankind, and how we are always involved in that "*I am willing*" which He pronounces on our behalf. To enter into God's "I will" through faith means opening the doors for Him to act in us and through us.

So faith is not only important for our own salvation, but also for the work that God wants to accomplish in all mankind. This is one more reason why we should pray and strive for the growth of our faith.

In today's Gospel, the Lord commands the leper to come to the priest and bring his offering according to the Law of Moses. Jesus wanted to show those who looked at Him with suspicion that He was acting according to the Law, and that therefore there was no reason to suspect Him.

This gesture of the Lord was very wise, although it may not have had the desired effect on them. But Jesus was making them an offer, as if to say: "Look, I am acting in continuity with the Law".

With this gesture, the Lord also gives us an example for dealing with people who do not understand us or who view us with suspicion. Let us try to make ourselves understood, even if it does not seem to make much sense. And if we are not listened to and our explanations are not accepted, then we are always left with prayer.