

12. August 2023

Acting in faith

Mt 17:14-20

When Jesus was come to the multitude, there came to him a man falling down on his knees before him, saying: Lord, have pity on my son, for he is a lunatic, and suffereth much: for he falleth often into the fire, and often into the water. And I brought him to thy disciples, and they could not cure him. Then Jesus answered and said: O unbelieving and perverse generation, how long shall I be with you? How long shall I suffer you? Bring him hither to me. And Jesus rebuked him, and the devil went out of him, and the child was cured from that hour. Then came the disciples to Jesus secretly, and said: Why could not we cast him out? Jesus said to them: Because of your unbelief. For, amen I say to you, if you have faith as a grain of mustard seed, you shall say to this mountain, remove from hence hither, and it shall remove; and nothing shall be impossible to you. But this kind is not cast out but by prayer and fasting.

Over and over again in the Gospel the theme of lack of faith appears. Today we meet a Jesus who is displeased with this lack of faith and speaks surprising words, expressing a kind of tiredness at having to continue to be in the midst of people. We may find this reaction of the Lord unusual, especially if we consider that these words, addressed to an "unbelieving and perverse generation", were not spoken to the Pharisees and scribes who were setting traps for Him, but included His own disciples.

How can these statements of the Lord be correctly interpreted?

We must keep in mind the enormous importance of faith. It is the light that has been given to us after we have lost sight of God because of sin. In this light we recognise God, and all living relationship with Him takes place in the light of faith. Moreover, faith is also God's bridge to us in order to carry out His work of redemption in this world. How effectively and quickly it could produce its effect if people had great faith!

Added to this is the fact that faith is intimately linked to trust; and trust, in turn, is closely related to love for God. So when God finds great faith and trust in a soul, He can do great things through and with it.

Faith is undoubtedly a gift and an offering that comes from God; but we, for our part, must embrace it, ask for it, put it into practice, increase it... If this were not so, the Lord would not be so insistent on this point. And now, considering all these aspects, it is understandable why Jesus dislikes the lack of faith so much. This lack of faith slows down and limits God's saving work on man's behalf and prevents the light from fully penetrating the human being; darkness can continue to celebrate victories and the Redemption of mankind is, in a certain way, delayed.

When the Lord acts with His authority, the devil has to leave that child. The disciples could have done the same, if only their faith had been greater. The Lord makes them see that, thanks to faith, all things are possible: *"Nothing will be impossible for you"*.

This last word is tremendously important, if we let it penetrate our hearts. Many more things could happen if our faith were stronger, for this bridge from God to us and from us to Him would be wide open. Each one of us could bear more fruit if our faith were greater!

A large part of the countries that received the grace of having the gospel preached to them are increasingly losing the light of faith. The consequences are incalculable: the culture of death is proliferating and Western nations, instead of being messengers of the gospel to other peoples, are often becoming "missionaries of darkness".

Our response can only be to ask the Lord for the grace to increase our faith and to use every situation to put this faith into practice and strengthen it. Let us cling to the Lord in faith, even if we find ourselves in difficult situations.

The woman with a haemorrhage was healed by the Lord thanks to her faith (cf. Mt 9:22). Let us pray and act in faith, so that the dark situation of this world may be transformed and that the Church may become strong in faith. The Lord desires it and is waiting for us to do so, so that the world may believe in its Saviour and be delivered from the darkness. It is up to us too to make it happen!

NOTE: Beginning tomorrow we will hear a series of three Marian meditations leading up to the Feast of the Assumption. In the first, we will honour her as "Daughter of the

Father”; in the second, as “Mother of the Son”; and in the third, finally, as “Bride of the Holy Spirit”.