

11. January 2024

Believing, listening and doing God's will

Mk 1:40-45 (Reading from the Novus Ordo)

And a leper came to him beseeching him, and kneeling said to him, "If you will, you can make me clean." Moved with pity, he stretched out his hand and touched him, and said to him, "I will; be clean." And immediately the leprosy left him, and he was made clean. And he sternly charged him, and sent him away at once, and said to him, "See that you say nothing to any one; but go, show yourself to the priest, and offer for your cleansing what Moses commanded, for a proof to the people." But he went out and began to talk freely about it, and to spread the news, so that Jesus could no longer openly enter a town, but was out in the country; and people came to him from every quarter.

The faith of the leper unleashes the Lord's compassion and desire to save. This is a truth that should be deeply impressed upon us. The Lord wants to heal; the Lord wants to save; the Lord wants to call all people into the kingdom of His Father; the Lord wants to cleanse everyone of their leprosy, whether physical or spiritual. *"I will, be clean"*, Jesus says to the leper.

So everything depends on the faith we have. Again and again the Lord reminds us of the importance of faith - there are so many passages in Scripture that speak of it! So we should ask ourselves: How can our faith grow, how can it become so great that the Lord can do all that He wants?

On the one hand, we should pray for our faith to increase, just like the disciples who asked the Lord: *"Increase our faith"* (Lk 17:5). Another way to increase our faith is to reflect on all that God has done in us: how often the Lord has intervened in our lives; how often our prayers have been answered; from how many dangers He has saved us; how faithfully He has sustained us in times of crisis!

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 often forgotten. But it is only when we give thanks for what we have received that we can

grasp the full dimension of reality. In this regard, we are reminded of the Gospel passage in which only one of the ten lepers cured by the Lord returns to give glory to God (cf. Lk 17:11-19).

Every experience with God, if we apply it correctly, serves to deepen our faith, because every experience teaches us how God cares for mankind and how His whole being is filled with this "I will". When we enter into God's "I will" through faith, we open the doors for Him to act in us and through us.

So faith is not only important for our own salvation; it is at the service of the work that God wants to do in all humanity. This is all the more reason why we should seek and strive to increase our faith.

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

The Lord's gesture is very wise, although it may not have had the desired effect on them. But Jesus was making them an offer, as if to say to them: "Behold, I act in continuity with the Law".

With this gesture, the Lord gives us an example of how to deal with people who do not understand us or who look at 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 left with prayer.

The leper in today's Gospel, after being cured, did not follow the instructions given to him by the Lord. Overjoyed at the miracle of his healing, he told everyone what had happened to him. Although it is "right and just" to proclaim the works of God, it is even more important to listen and obey exactly what the Lord asks of us, rather than to act out of emotions of joy. The consequence of the leper's disobedience was that Jesus could no longer freely preach the Gospel everywhere, but had to go into hiding.

Believing, listening and doing God's will... These three elements will make our spiritual life both flexible and stable.