

24. February 2020

“Aspects of faith”

*Mk 9,14-29*

*As they were rejoining the disciples they saw a large crowd round them and some scribes arguing with them. At once, when they saw him, the whole crowd were struck with amazement and ran to greet him. And he asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” A man answered him from the crowd, “Master, I have brought my son to you; there is a spirit of dumbness in him, and when it takes hold of him it throws him to the ground, and he foams at the mouth and grinds his teeth and goes rigid. And I asked your disciples to drive it out and they were unable to.” In reply he said to them, “Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you? Bring him to me.” They brought the boy to him, and at once the spirit of dumbness threw the boy into convulsions, and he fell to the ground and lay writhing there, foaming at the mouth. Jesus asked the father, “How long has this been happening to him?” “From childhood”, he said, “and it has often thrown him into fire and into water, in order to destroy him. But if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.” “If you can?” retorted Jesus. “Everything is possible for one who has faith.” At once the father of the boy cried out, “I have faith. Help my lack of faith!” And when Jesus saw that a crowd was gathering, he rebuked the unclean spirit. “Deaf and dumb spirit,” he said, “I command you: come out of him and never enter him again.” Then it threw the boy into violent convulsions and came out shouting, and the boy lay there so like a corpse that most of them said, “He is dead.” But Jesus took him by the hand and helped him up, and he was able to stand. When he had gone indoors, his disciples asked him when they were by themselves, “Why were we unable to drive it out?” He answered, “This is the kind that can be driven out only by prayer.”*

Today's text talks again about faith. We hear Jesus speak words that we are not used to hearing from his mouth. He seems to react very unwillingly at people's unbelief: “Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?”

This is not the only time that Jesus rebukes the lack of faith of his disciples in the Gospel.

Evidently, he is displeased to see that people do not adequately accept the offer of faith and that, consequently, the things that could happen if they believed do not happen.

*“How much longer must I put up with you?”* -This exclamation of Jesus is full of pain, and allows us to get an idea of the torment he suffers inside when man does not believe. It is as if he were before closed doors, which do not allow grace to act. It is a terrible suffering, for no one like Him knows the consequences of lack of faith. He does not suffer for himself, but for men, for their salvation, for their little faith...

Today's text tells us about a possessed boy, whom the disciples are unable to free. And it is in this context that the moving encounter between Jesus and the father of the child takes place. As the disciples had not been able to cast out the demon, the man approaches Jesus, already with some doubt: *“If you can do anything, have pity on us and help us.”* Jesus' answer is very clear: *“If you can?... Everything is possible for one who has faith.”*

Here we come to the core: Faith can move mountains, Jesus said (cf. Mt 17,20). Faith releases God's action. This must be present to us; and even more: God wants to act! God wants to bring his light into our personal life and into the life of the nations, to make his saving action present, to give man all the good things that he has prepared for him.

However, he is hindered by our lack of faith, by our sceptical attitude, by the attachments that we do not want to let go of and that prevent us from clinging to God alone. The Lord has to face up to all this! Therefore, as if sighing from the depths of his being, he exclaims: *“Faithless generation, how much longer must I be among you? How much longer must I put up with you?”*

The boy's father's reaction is the right one: *“I have faith. Help my lack of faith!”*

With his words, this man teaches us the way in which we must face our lack of faith. It is a decision of the will: we want to believe and then we implore the Lord to help our unbelief. We can be sure that God will listen to such a sincere request, especially if we ourselves have begun to suffer under our lack of faith.

We need faith, and somehow we can also say that the Lord needs our faith. We need it urgently, to be able to recognize God in the midst of this world, to let ourselves be saved by Him and receive all the offerings of His grace; to acquire the vision that

He has of this world, to act according to God's will and thus become witnesses of His presence.

God, for His part, needs our faith, so that He can manifest Himself in our lives; so that His goodness and love for men can be known through our testimony, so that other people can also find their way home to Him!