

Saturday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Mt 17,14-20): A man approached Jesus, knelt before him and said, «Sir, have pity on my son who is an epileptic and is in a wretched state. He has often fallen into the fire and at other times into the water. I brought him to your disciples but they could not heal him». Jesus replied, «You, faithless and evil people! How long must I be with you? How long must I put up with you? Bring him here to me». And Jesus commanded the evil spirit to leave the boy, and the boy was immediately healed.

The disciples then gathered around Jesus and asked him privately, «Why couldn't we drive out the spirit?». Jesus said to them, «Because you have little faith. I say to you: if only you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could tell that mountain to move from here to there, and the mountain would obey. Nothing would be impossible to you».

«If only you had faith the size of a mustard seed (...), nothing would be impossible to you»

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Today, once more, Jesus teaches us that miracles are measured by the measure of our faith: «I say to you: if only you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could tell that mountain to move from here to there, and the mountain would obey» (Mt 17:20). In fact, as St. Jerome and St. Augustine point out, in working out our saintliness (something clearly exceeding our own forces) we are actually in the process of “moving mountains”. Miracles do exist, and if we do not see more of them is just because with our little faith we do not let him make them.

Before a disconcerting and incomprehensible situation human beings react in many different ways. Epilepsy was considered an incurable illness, which was suffered by those possessed with evil spirits.

The father of that creature expressed his love for his son by begging Jesus for his total healing. His behaviour is shown as a true act of faith. He kneels down before Jesus and begs him directly intimately convinced that his request will be favourably attended to. How he expresses his request shows at the same time the full acceptance of his personal condition and the recognition of the mercifulness of He that may feel sorry for others.

That father mentions the apostles have not been able to get rid of that devil. This element introduces Jesus' instruction while pointing out the little faith of his disciples. To follow him, to become his disciple, to collaborate in his mission demands a profound and well based faith, capable of supporting adversities, setbacks, difficulties and incomprehension. Faith is effective only when it is strongly rooted. In other evangelic fragments the same Jesus refers to the lack of faith of his followers. The expression «nothing would be impossible to you» (Mt 17:20) points out with all its strength to the importance of our faith to follow the Master.

God's Word places before us the thought about the quality of our faith and the way how we get deeper into it while reminding us that father's attitude by approaching Jesus and pleading with all the strength of his loving heart.