Saturday of the Eighteenth Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mt* 17:14-20): A man came up to Jesus, knelt down before him, and said, "Lord, have pity on my son, who is a lunatic and suffers severely; often he falls into fire, and often into water. I brought him to your disciples, but they could not cure him." Jesus said in reply, "O faithless and perverse generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring the boy here to me." Jesus rebuked him and the demon came out of him, and from that hour the boy was cured. Then the disciples approached Jesus in private and said, "Why could we not drive it out?" He said to them, "Because of your little faith. Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move. Nothing will be impossible for you."

"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed… Nothing will be impossible for you"

Fr. Fidel CATALÁN i Catalán
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Today, once more, Jesus teaches us that miracles are measured by the measure of our faith: "Amen, I say to you, if you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you will say to this mountain, 'Move from here to there,' and it will move" (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, it is simply because of our little faith, we do not allow Him to work 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 child expresses his love for his son by begging Jesus for his total healing. His behavior is shown as a true act of faith. He kneels down before Jesus and begs him directly, intimately convinced that his request will be favorably granted. How he expresses his request shows, at the same time, the full acceptance of his personal condition and his recognition of the mercy of the One who has compassion 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 passages of the Gospel, Jesus Himself laments the lack of faith among His followers. The expression “nothing will be impossible for you” (Mt 17:20) powerfully conveys just how essential faith is in following the Master.

God's Word places before us a reflection on the quality of our faith and how we deepen it, reminding us of the father’s attitude as he approached Jesus, pleading with all the strength of his loving heart.

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “With the faithful trust in God’s word, we shall be well able to command a great mountain of tribulation to void from the place where it stood in our heart; whereas with a very feeble faith and a faint, we shall be scant able to remove a little hillock.” (Saint Thomas More)

- “Each one of us in our own daily lives can testify to Christ by the power of God, the power of faith. And how do we draw from this strength? We draw it from God in prayer. Prayer is the breath of faith.” (Francis)

- “Now, however, ‘we walk by faith, not by sight’ (2 Cor 5:7) (...). Faith can be put to the test. The world we live in often seems very far from the one promised us by faith (...).” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, Nº 164)