

Monday 32nd in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 17,1-6): Jesus said to his disciples, «Scandals will necessarily come and cause people to fall; but woe to the one who has brought it about. It would be better for that one to be thrown into the sea with a millstone around the neck. Truly this would be better for that person than to cause one of these little ones to fall.

»Be careful. If your brother offends you, rebuke him and if he is sorry, forgive him. And if he offends you seven times in a day but says to you seven times: ‘I’m sorry’, forgive him».

The apostles said to the Lord, «Increase our faith». And the Lord said, «If you have faith even the size of a mustard seed, you may say to this tree: ‘Be uprooted and plant yourself in the sea’, and it will obey you».

«If your brother offends you seven times in a day (...), forgive him»

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Today, the Gospel speaks of three important topics. In the first place, our behavior with children. If in other occasions childhood has been praised, on this one we are warned of the evil we can cause them.

To scandalize is not to make lots of noise or going mad, as sometimes, we understand it; the Greek word which the evangelist uses is “skandalon”, meaning something which makes you stumble upon or slip, like a stone or a banana peel, to say it clearer. We must highly respect infants, and woe to the one who brings them to sin, in any way! (cf. Lk 17:1). Jesus anticipates the great punishment that waits for him and He does it with very vivid images. In the Holy Land we can still find some very old millstones; they are great round stones with a hole in the midst (they may also remind us, in a larger scale, of the cervical collars we should wear when

suffering a traumatism). Putting the stone around the scandalous' neck and throwing him into the sea expresses a most terrible punishment. Jesus uses here an almost black joke sort of language. Woe to us if we cause one of these little ones to fall! And there are many ways to cause them to sin: to lie, to ambition, an unjust triumph. To devote oneself to tasks that will satisfy their vanity...

In the second place, forgiveness. Jesus asks us to forgive, as many times as needed, even in the same day, if the other is sorry, even if our soul resents it: «Be careful. If your brother offends you, rebuke him and if he is sorry, forgive him.» (Lk 17:3). Our capacity to forgive is the thermometer of our charity.

In the third place, the faith: more than mind wealth (in a strict human meaning), is a “mood”, the outcome of God's experience, is to be able to act by leaning on his confidence. «Faith is the beginning of true life», St. Ignatius of Antioch says. Who acts with faith may attain true wonders; this is how the Lord expresses it when He says: «If you have faith even the size of a mustard seed, you may say to this tree: ‘Be uprooted and plant yourself in the sea’, and it will obey you» (Lk 17:6).