

Monday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (Lk 17:1-6): Jesus said to his disciples, “Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the one through whom they occur. It would be better for him if a millstone were put around his neck and he be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin.

Be on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him. And if he wrongs you seven times in one day and returns to you seven times saying, ‘I am sorry,’ you should forgive him.”

And the Apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

“And if he wrongs you seven times in one day... you should forgive him”

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Today, the Gospel speaks of three important topics. First, our behavior with children. If on 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, 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 more clearly. 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, on a larger scale, of the cervical collars we wear when suffering a trauma). Putting the stone around the scandalous one's neck and throwing him into the sea expresses a most terrible punishment. Jesus uses an almost dark humor language example here. 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 be ambitious, to be unjustly triumphant. To devote oneself to tasks that will satisfy their vanity...

Secondly, 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 on your guard! If your brother sins, rebuke him; and if he repents, forgive him.” (Lk 17:3). Our capacity to forgive is the measuring stick of our charity.

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

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

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“To practice fraternal correction — which is so deeply rooted in the Gospel — is a proof of supernatural trust and affection. Be thankful for it when you receive it, and don't neglect to practice it with those around you.” (Saint Josemaria)

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“Faith trusting in Christ, welcoming him, letting him transform us, following him to the very end makes humanly impossible things possible in every situation.” (Benedict XVI)

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“Anyone who uses the power at his disposal in such a way that it leads others to do wrong becomes guilty of scandal and responsible for the evil that he has directly or indirectly encouraged. ‘Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come!’”

(Catechism of the Catholic Church, n. 2287)