Monday of the Thirty-second Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Lk* 17:1-6): Jesus said to his disciples, “Scandals are bound to 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 presents us with three important themes. First, our attitude toward children. While other passages have praised the virtues of childhood, this one warns us about the harm that can be done to them.

To ‘scandalize’ does not mean to shock or surprise as we might assume. The Greek word used by the evangelist is ‘skandalon’, which means an object that causes someone to stumble or slip—like a stumbling block or a hidden obstacle. Children must be shown great respect, and woe to anyone who leads them into sin in any way (cf. Lk 17:1). Jesus warns of severe punishment for such a person, using a vivid and dramatic image. In the Holy Land, you can still see ancient millstones that resemble massive weights. Throwing the one who leads others astray into the sea with such a stone around their neck expresses a terrible judgment. Jesus uses language that borders on dark humor. Woe to us if we harm children or lead them into sin! And there are many ways to harm them: lying, fostering selfish ambition, pursuing success unjustly, or catering to their vanity.

Secondly, forgiveness. Jesus asks us to forgive as many times as needed, even if it’s repeatedly on the same day, as long as the other person is repentant, even if it pains our soul: 'If your brother sins, rebuke

him; and if he repents, forgive him' (Lk 17:3). The measure of charity is the capacity to forgive.

Third, faith. More than a wealth of understanding (in a merely human sense), faith is a 'state of mind,' the fruit of experiencing God, and the ability to act with trust in Him. “Faith is the beginning of true life,” says St. Ignatius of Antioch. Those who act with faith can achieve amazing things, as the Lord says: “If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could 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

- “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)

- “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)

- “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)