Monday of the Seventh Week in Ordinary Time

Gospel text (*Mk* 9:14-29): As Jesus came down from the mountain with Peter, James, John and approached the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. Immediately on seeing him, the whole crowd was utterly amazed. They ran up to him and greeted him. He asked them, “What are you arguing about with them?” Someone from the crowd answered him, “Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so.”

He said to them in reply, “O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him to me.” They brought the boy to him. And when he saw him, the spirit immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground, he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. Then he questioned his father, “How long has this been happening to him?” He replied, “Since childhood. It has often thrown him into fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us.” Jesus said to him, “‘If you can!’ Everything is possible to one who has faith.” Then the boy’s father cried out, “I do believe, help my unbelief!”

Jesus, on seeing a crowd rapidly gathering, rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it, “Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!” Shouting and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out. He became like a corpse, which caused many to say, “He is dead!” But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up. When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, “Why could we not drive the spirit out?” He said to them, “This kind can only come out through prayer.”

“I do believe, help my unbelief!”

Fr. Antoni CAROL i Hostench
(Sant Cugat del Vallès, Barcelona, Spain)

Today, we see —once again!— the Lord being approached by people: “They ran up to him and greeted him”, and, at the same time, He is attentive towards them, always sensitive to their needs. When He suspects that something has happened, he asks and gets interested in the problem.

A man from the crowd intervenes. He is the father of a boy that is seized by an evil spirit: “Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid” (Mk 9:17-18).

It is terrible what the Devil can do! a creature without charity. —Oh Lord, we must pray! “Deliver us from evil.” It is hard to understand those who still claim there is no Devil nowadays, or even worse, those who render him some type of worship... It is absurd! We should learn a lesson: we cannot play with fire!

“I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so.” (Mk 9:18). When Jesus heard these words, He gets upset. He is annoyed, mostly, for their lack of faith... And they lack faith because they need to pray more: “This kind can only come out through prayer.” (Mk 9:29).

Prayer is the “intimate” dialogue with God. Saint John Paul II affirmed that “Prayer always brings with it a type of interior hiddenness with Christ in God. Only in this hiddenness do we see the workings of the Holy Spirit.” Practicing a friendly assiduity with Jesus in such an intimate atmosphere of seclusion increases our confidence in Him, that is, increases our faith.

But this faith, that can move mountains and drives out the evil spirits (since “everything is possible to one who has faith”) is, above all, a gift from God. In any case, our prayer prepares us to receive this gift. However, we have to beg for this gift: “I do believe, help my unbelief!” (Mk 9:24). Christ's response will not take long!

Thoughts on Today's Gospel

- “We had become unworthy to pray, but God in his goodness allowed us to speak with him. Our prayer is incense that gives him the greatest pleasure.”(St. John Vianney)

- “His word is a word of love, a purifying word: it expels the spirits of fear, loneliness and opposition to God; thus it purifies our soul and gives us interior peace.” (Benedict XVI)

- “(...) To live, grow and persevere in the faith until the end we must nourish it with the word of God; we must beg the Lord to increase our faith; it must be "working through charity," (Gal 5:6) abounding in hope (Rom 15:13), and rooted in the faith of the Church.” (Catechism of the Catholic Church, 162)