

Monday's Gospel: Sincere Mutual Help

Gospel for Monday in the 32nd Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Lk 17:1-6*)

Jesus said to his disciples, “Temptations to sin are sure to come; but woe to him by whom they come! It would be better for him if a millstone were hung round his neck and he were cast into the sea, than that he should cause one of these little ones to sin. Take heed to yourselves; if your brother sins, rebuke him, and if he repents, forgive him; and if he sins against

you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, and says, ‘I repent,’ you must forgive him.

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith!”

And the Lord said, “If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you.”

Commentary

Luke the Evangelist transmits to us, in very few words, three vital teachings of Jesus. These teachings could be included under the title “the wisdom of the prudent heart.” The first speaks about scandal, and the need to take special care of the weakest. We are all struck in a special way by the evil inflicted on

defenseless and innocent persons, especially children. Small children naturally place their trust in their elders, to take care of them, guide them, instruct them, and correct them if necessary. Jesus warns us that in the current state of the world wounded by sin, as long as our hearts have not been totally transformed by grace, unfortunately these innocent people will encounter the suffering provoked by our selfishness. Jesus has come to offer us the transforming strength needed to leave behind the “old man” still living in us. Harming the weakest is an especially grave evil, since they have entrusted themselves to our care. May we truly want and seek this transformation, with the wisdom given by the Holy Spirit dwelling in our heart, who continually offers his abundant and precious gifts and helps us to grow in virtue.

We need to have this same sincere concern for those who go astray. It is not a question of thinking we are better, qualified to be judges, nor of seeing ourselves, with a false humility, as the worst. It is about fostering a loving responsibility for the others. We all correct one another each day in ordinary things, when we see that we or others can do things better: in the kitchen, in sports, in professional matters. Why wouldn't we also correct one another in spiritual matters? But with a humble and sincere correction that stems from a heart that sincerely wants the other person to grow. It is very easy to correct others for reasons that are somewhat misguided, and it is also easy to correct in an inappropriate way. God corrects us because he loves us. With infinite patience and loving demand. And he truly forgives us. Therefore we need to correct others taking into account their way of being and

specific circumstances. That is the good correction, one that considers the truth of the other person and the truth of what we want to help them attain.

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