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Monday's Gospel: A Father's Faith

Gospel for Monday in the 7th Week of Ordinary Time, and commentary.

Gospel (*Mk* 9:14-29)

As Jesus came down the mountain with Peter, James and John and approached the other disciples, they saw a great crowd about them, and scribes arguing with them. And immediately all the crowd, when they saw him, were greatly amazed, and ran up to him and greeted him. And he asked them, “What are you discussing with them?”

And one of the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I brought my son to you, for he has a dumb spirit; and wherever it seizes him, it dashes him down; and he foams and grinds his teeth and becomes rigid; and I asked your disciples to cast it out, and they were not able." And he answered them, "O faithless generation, how long am I to be with you? How long am I to bear with you? Bring him to me."

And they brought the boy to him; and when the spirit saw him, immediately it convulsed the boy, and he fell on the ground and rolled about, foaming at the mouth. And Jesus asked his father, "How long has he had this?" And he said, "From childhood. And it has often cast him into the fire and into the water, to destroy him; but if you can do anything, have pity on us and help us."

And Jesus said to him, "If you can! All things are possible to him who believes." Immediately the father of the child cried out and said, "I believe; help my unbelief!" And when Jesus saw that a crowd came running together, he rebuked the unclean spirit, saying to it, "You dumb and deaf spirit, I command you, come out of him, and never enter him again." And after crying out and convulsing him terribly, it came out, and the boy was like a corpse; so that most of them said, "He is dead."

But Jesus took him by the hand and lifted him up, and he arose. And when he had entered the house, his disciples asked him privately, "Why could we not cast it out?" And he said to them, "This kind cannot be driven out by anything but prayer."

Commentary

Upon returning from Mount Tabor, where his divine glory had been manifested in the Transfiguration, Jesus encounters his disciples arguing with a large crowd. A man had brought his son possessed by a demon and the Master's disciples couldn't cure him.

God often seems to hide and we men have to face problems that exceed our possibilities. He wants to test our faith, the faith that can move mountains and that comes from friendship with God. This is Jesus' great concern: "when the Son of Man comes, will he find faith on earth?" (*Lk 18:8*).

Our Lord tells the father of the possessed boy: you ask if I can do this. "All things are possible to him who believes!" We see this message stressed a number of times in the Gospels. The angel had said to Mary:

“with God nothing is impossible” (*Lk* 1:37). And Jesus tells the apostles, disconcerted by how difficult it is for the rich to enter the kingdom of heaven: “With men it is impossible, but not with God; for all things are possible with God” (*Mk* 10:27).

We know that God can do everything, and yet how often we seem to lack faith! That is why we can recognize ourselves in this father’s cry: “I believe, Lord; help my unbelief!” This prayer combines both faith and a lack of faith. In fact, every time we say “I believe” we are not only expressing our faith, but we are asking for a stronger faith. Thus we can see these words as the most natural, most human and most heartfelt prayer in the Gospels, and in a certain sense the very essence of faith.

This kind of demon, like all the evils that afflict human life, can be

expelled only by a prayer to God filled with trust. Saint Josemaria said: “That man feels his faith wavering and he is afraid that his lack of trust will prevent his son from being cured. He weeps. Don’t be ashamed of tears like these, for they are the fruit of our love of God, of contrite prayer, of true humility . . . We too now can speak the same words to him: ‘Lord, I do believe! I have been brought up to believe in you. I have decided to follow you closely. Repeatedly during my life I have implored your mercy. And repeatedly too I have thought it impossible that you could perform such marvels in the hearts of your children. Lord, I do believe, but help me to believe more and better!’” (*Friends of God*, no. 204)

Giovanni Vassallo

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