

*Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...*

**Sunday, 6 October 2019**

**Lk 17:5-10**

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In a recent interview of Pope Francis, a young boy asked a question to the Pope. Holy Father, why God permits so many disasters, calamities and sufferings in the world? Doesn't God love the world? If God loves the world how can he permits to happen so many accidents, so many young people die of cancer and so many sickness and so on...Holy father replied the boy...Thank you for your intelligent question. Do you know, to some questions there is no answer. Only God knows the answer. On certain occasions we have to trust in God instead of asking questions. We also make the same question in so many occasions. Yesterday I celebrated a funeral ceremony of a young mother of 21 years, leaving twin babies of one month old. I heard so many people asking the same question...why...why...The answers of these questions we can find in today's readings.

The virtue of faith and the necessity of faith is the dominating theme of today's readings. Faith is our personal response to a God who continues to reveal himself to us and invites us to recognize his holiness and beauty.

Every situation in the world presents a very great contrast between human powerlessness in the face of sickness and death on the one hand, and the striking force of faith on the other. We are in a constant relationship with a God of wonder who transforms us, heals us and removes our pains and transforms them into joy.

Faith works miracles and there are the thousands of small miracles that no-one notices them except those concerned. Certainly people are aware of the work of the power of God in human situation. In this rational world we need the spiritual insight to recognize the working of these miracles. But faith is there like a small seed which when planted in the human heart grows slowly to yield fruit. Today's readings invite us to reflect on how profoundly faith influences our view of the world and our actions.

Sometimes our difficulties make us question and wonder about our faith and God. There are times when we all doubt. When something goes wrong we may say, God doesn't care, or ask "Does God exist?" In the first reading today the prophet Habakkuk cried out to God, "How long, Lord, am I to cry for help while you will not listen?" (Hab 1:2) In the Gospel the apostles asked Jesus, "Increase our faith." (Luke 17:5) God said to Habakkuk at the end of our first reading, "...the upright man will live by his faithfulness." (Hab 2:4) And in the Gospel, Jesus said, "Were your 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." (Luke 17:6) In fact we already have enough faith to help us overcome life's

problems. We are sons and daughters of God but we don't allow this faith to have more of an effect in our lives.

Most of the times we lament. We look at ourselves and say "I can't do it. I am not strong enough, wise enough. I do not have the money, or the faith, or the

ability to succeed in what I am doing." That may be true, we may not be able on our own. But with God we can accomplish what we could not do without God. The words of Paul to Timothy in our second reading are very beautiful. Paul is saying to Timothy, "Don't look at yourself, look at what God has given you, do not be timid."

The verbs used in the text are the most explicit: rekindle, don't be ashamed, take part, keep in front, and live with faith and love. They are all verbs that call for action, not to wait for salvation, but to work for it. "Because God has not given us a cowardly spirit, but a spirit of energy, love and good judgment."

In Luke's text we see the disciples, aware of their little faith, of their inability to give their full adherence to Jesus and his message. That is why they ask him to increase their faith. Jesus actually confirms that they have a smaller faith than a mustard seed. This minimum of faith is enough to make the power of God available to the disciple.

I look around and I think something doesn't work. So many Christians, so many Catholics, so many religious schools ... And I wonder: How many believers? Do we have faith or do we have a series of beliefs, a long and complicated creed that we recite from memory and that has little to do with our lives?

Jesus' words continue to resonate today. "If you had faith like a mustard seed ..." Or if you followed my path, if you lived according to the Gospel ... you would have the strength of God to change the system.

The righteous will live by faith ... Can I say the same about myself? Is faith the principle that really guides my life? Am I really a person "of faith", of courage?

As we begin the "Extraordinary Month of Mission", let us ask the Lord to increase our faith in Him. "...Celebrating this month will help us first to rediscover the missionary dimension of our faith in Jesus Christ, a faith graciously bestowed on us in baptism. Faith in Jesus Christ enables us to see all things in their proper perspective, as we view the world with God's own eyes and heart..." (Pope Francis)

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