The Holy See

POPE FRANCIS***ANGELUS***Saint Peter's Square

Sunday, 6 October 2019[Multimedia]

Dear Brothers and Sisters,

Good morning!

Today's Gospel passage (cf. Lk 17:5-10) presents the theme of faith, introduced by the disciples' request: "increase our faith!" (v. 5). A beautiful prayer, which we should pray often throughout the day: "Lord, increase my faith!". Jesus responds with two images: the grain of mustard and the willing servant. "If you had faith as a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this sycamine tree: 'Be rooted up, and be planted in the sea,' and it would obey you" (v. 6). The sycamine is a robust tree, deeply rooted in the ground and resistant to the winds. Thus, Jesus wishes to make it understood that faith, even if small, can have the power to uproot so much as a sycamine. And then to transplant it into the sea, which is something even more improbable: but nothing is impossible for those who have faith, because they do not rely on their own strengths but in God, who can do everything.

The faith comparable to the grain of mustard is a faith that is not proud and self-assured: it does not pretend to be that of a great believer at times making gaffes! It is a faith that, in its humility, feels a great need of God and in its smallness surrenders itself, trusting fully in Him. It is a faith that gives us the ability to look with hope at the alternate events of life, which helps us to accept even defeat, suffering, with the awareness that evil never has, never will have, the last word.

How can we understand if we truly have faith, that is, if our faith, while miniscule, is genuine, pure, sincere? Jesus explains this by indicating what the measure of faith is: service. And he does so with a parable which at first glance is somewhat disconcerting, because it presents the figure of an overbearing and indifferent master. But this master's very way of doing things highlights what is the true core of the parable, which is the servant's attitude of willingness. Jesus wishes to say that this is how people of faith are with regard to God: they completely give themselves over to his will, without calculations or pretexts.

This attitude toward God is also reflected in the manner of behaviour in the community: it is reflected in the joy of being at the service of one another, finding one's reward already therein, and not in the recognition and gains that may derive from it. This is what Jesus teaches at the end of this narrative: "when you have done all that is commanded you, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty'" (v. 10).

Unworthy servants, that is, without expecting to be thanked, without pretexts. "We are unworthy servants" is an expression of humility and willingness, which does much good for the Church and recalls the right attitude for working within her: humble service, of which Jesus gave the example, by washing the feet of the disciples (cf. Jn 13:3-17).

May the Virgin Mary, woman of faith, help us to go along this path. Let us turn to her on the vigil of the Feast of Our Lady of the Rosary, in communion with the faithful gathered in Pompeii for the traditional Supplication.

After praying the Angelus, the Holy Father continued:

Dear brothers and sisters! Just a short while ago, in Saint Peter's Basilica, we concluded the Eucharistic celebration with which we opened the Special Assembly of the Synod of Bishops for the Pan-Amazon Region. For three weeks, the Synod Fathers, gathered around the Successor of Peter, will reflect on the Church's mission in the Amazon, on evangelization and the promotion of an integral ecology. I ask you to accompany this ecclesial event with prayer, so that it may be experienced in fraternal communion and in docility to the Holy Spirit, who always shows the ways to bear witness to the Gospel.

I thank all of you numerous pilgrims who have come from Italy and from so many parts of the world. I greet the faithful from Heidelberg, Germany, and from Rozlazino, Poland; the students from Dillingen, also in Germany, and those from the Istituto Sant'Alfonso in Bella Vista, Argentina.

I greet the group from Fara Vicentino and Zugliano, the families from Alta Val Tidone, the pilgrims from Castelli Romani who participated in a march for peace, and those from Camisano Vicentino who arrived along the Via Francigena for an initiative of solidarity.

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