

**IF YOU HAD FAITH! – Biblical Commentary by F. Alberto Maggi OSM**

***Lk 17.5-10***

***At that time the apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith!" And the Lord said, "If you had faith like a grain of mustard seed, you could say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.***

***"Will any one of you who has a servant plowing or keeping sheep say to him when he has come in from the field, 'Come at once and recline at table'? Will he not rather say to him, 'Prepare supper for me, and dress properly, and serve me while I eat and drink, and afterward you will eat and drink'?"***

***Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded? So you also, when you have done all that you were commanded, say, 'We are unworthy servants; we have only done what was our duty.'"***

In Luke's Gospel Jesus presents two images of everyday life, of the relationship between the servants and their master, but completely different. Even contrary to one another.

In the first, in chapter 12 of this Gospel, Jesus speaks of a master that, returning home late at night and finding his servants still awake, what does he do? Not only does he not make them serve him, but he will serve them himself. It is the image of the Eucharist, where the Lord, when they had decided to put their lives to serving others he communicates his own capacity to love, for a bigger and more generous outcome.

But here, in the verses of today's reading, in Luke chapter 17, 5-10, the picture that Jesus presents is completely different. It is the master that when the servant returns from working in the fields, wants to be served. And will say, "Does he thank the servant because he did what was commanded?"

Why is there this contrast? What does it mean?

Let's see the text. Jesus had invited His disciples to be "sons of the Most High" similar to God. And can one be similar to God?

Jesus had said: "Be merciful as your Father is merciful". God shows in the exercise of mercy by always giving forgiveness, a free pardon, a anticipated pardon. And Jesus asks His disciples to always forgive

Jesus will say to His disciples "*...if he sins against you seven times in the day, and turns to you seven times, saying, 'I repent,'*" - and the imperative is used. Therefore, Jesus wants to make His disciples sons of God, fully free. But to do this it is necessary to be capable of a love similar to that of the Lord's.

Giving pardon freely is the proof of this. But to do this one must abandon that relationship servant- master, with the obedience to the laws, that make up part of the old alliance. Moses, servant of the Lord, had imposed an alliance between the servants and their master, based on the observance of the laws. Jesus, son of God, proposes a new relationship between sons and their Father, based on the acceptance and the similarity to the love of the Father.

For Jesus, the believers are not those that obey God observing his laws, but those that like the Father practice a love similar to his, if the disciples do not do this, if they are incapable of this mercy that is manifested in forgiveness, they remain at the servants level. Therefore today's text puts an alternative in front of the disciples: continue with the old tradition and be servants of the Lord without ever being able to perceive love, and therefore incapable of communicating it to others, or accept the novelty brought by Jesus, to be sons of God, fully free.

And the freedom that is manifested in love and in forgiveness is for all.