

Celebrating Extraordinary Missionary Month October 2019...

Wednesday, 30 October 2019

Gospel: Lk 17:1-10

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To compare yesterday's Gospel message for the Eucharistic Liturgy and that of today would bring in a great contrast. If yesterday's was a serenade, the Gospel passage of today is presenting some jarring notes of music. If yesterday presented the beauty, serenity and the organic growth of the Kingdom of God through the images of mustard seed and leaven (Lk 13), today, the reality struck us bluntly (Lk 17).

The themes for today are varied and interconnected. They move like a perching bird from one theme to another intricately connected on a vital thread. They take a serpentine path starting with temptations and sin. Friendly intervention, repentance, forgiveness, faith and prayer are the points *en route* this journey.

Reality strikes us when Jesus speaks about the inevitability or the reality of temptations and sin. But the agent through whom temptations happen or scandals occur, Jesus mercilessly condemns them. What we consider as a curse, violent death by drowning in the deep waters, is preferred as a better option than being agents of scandal. The sinfulness is gravest when those who are tempted to sin are the little ones. The little ones could be the newly converted Christians or the young people who are young in age or who are vulnerable in many ways.

Intervention in the form of rebuke is the means put forward by Jesus to correct the erring brother or sister. If the sinner repents, we are advised to go to the next step, forgiveness. That is the Christian answer to the sinners. The Gospel is the rebuke from God as well as the good news of the forgiveness as in the story of the Prodigal Son. It is to restore a relationship and to establish a better one after being forgiven. It is to mend the broken relationship with the repenting sinner who is no more a sinner but a preferred child of God who accepts God as well. It is the divine sense of forgiveness which is not easy for a human being to practice.

The words of Jesus prompts the disciples to pray, 'Increase our faith.' Only with the grace from above, we could practice forgiveness which leads to love and acceptance. The disciples understood the human predicament and resorts to prayer. In answer to prayer, God bestows faith and faith strengthens us to forgive. And as sinners, we need the same grace bestowed on us to repent and to be forgiven. And all, irrespective of the sinner or the one who forgives, need to pray, 'Increase our faith.'

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