

February Word of Life

Immediately the father of the child cried out, "I believe; help my unbelief!" (Mk.9:24)

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Jesus was making his way to Jerusalem. He was with his disciples who he had begun to prepare for this decisive appointment. He was going to meet with rejection by the religious authorities, be condemned to death by the Romans and then be crucified and rise again. This was very difficult for Peter and his other followers to understand but Mark's Gospel enables us to gradually comprehend Jesus' mission. The vulnerability of his suffering will be the means of salvation for humankind. On the journey, Jesus met many people and because of his openness, he understood their needs. Here we see him responding to a father who was crying out and asking him to heal his son who had serious difficulties. The child was probably suffering from epilepsy. For the miracle to happen, Jesus had to make a request. He asked the father to have faith.

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The father shouted his answer in front of the crowd that had gathered around Jesus. His words seemed almost contradictory. This man, like us, understood how fragile faith can be; it was difficult for him to trust completely in God's love and in his plans for each of his children. However, it is also true that God trusts us all and does nothing without our contribution, without our freely given "yes" to him. He asks us to do our part even though this may be very small. He asks us to recognise his voice that speaks through our conscience, to trust him and, as a consequence, to begin to love.

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We are often immersed in a culture that regards aggression as the key to success. This aggression can be expressed in a variety of ways. In contrast, the Gospel presents us with a paradox. We can look on our weaknesses, our limits and our fragility as the starting point in relating to God and in participating with him in the greatest of challenges – the unity of the entire human family. Throughout his life, Jesus taught us about the logic of service and of taking the "lowest" place. This is the perfect position to transform what could seem defeat into victory that is not transitory and selfish but enduring and shared by all.

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Faith is a gift. We can and must persevere in asking for it so that we can collaborate with God in giving hope to others. Chiara Lubich, the founder of the Focolare, wrote, *"To believe and to feel that God looks at us and loves us means that every prayer, everything that happens whether good, bad or indifferent, every illness, every single thing [...] is seen by God. If God is Love, then the most logical thing we can do is trust him completely. We can confide in him often and tell him about our concerns, our proposals and all the things we plan to do. Each one of us can abandon ourselves to his love with complete confidence that we will be understood, comforted and helped. [...] We can say to him, 'Lord, let me stay in your love. Don't let me live for a single moment without feeling, recognising and knowing - through faith or from experience - that you love me and you love everyone.'* Then, we can continue to love. Loving makes our faith become solid and steadfast. We will not only believe in God's love, we will also feel it within our souls and we will see 'miracles' happen around us."

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[1] C. Lubich. Word of Life October 2004