

Homily for 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year A

by Fr. Valentin Iurochkin

Matthew 13, 31-55

The main question we have to answer is this: What does the Lord mean when he calls the mustard seed the least of all the seeds?

St. Augustine writes saying: *“The mustard seed may be alluded to the warmth of faith”*, the warmth without which all the rest of the activities carried out by us in this world are absolutely meaningless. And *“this warmth of faith can be achieved only through the proclamation of the Gospel”*. That is to say: in today’s Gospel our Lord invites us throughout our own participation to bring the warmth of faith into the tepid hearts of those whose faith has wakened.

St. Jerome writes: *“The Gospel preaching is the least of all the systems of the schools; at first view it has no appearance of truth, announcing a man as God, God put to death, and proclaiming the offence of the cross”*. And many religions speaking about Christianity ought to place a question: “How is it possible for God to be crucified and to endure such a bitter passion? ‘No. This is absurd!’ – they answer”. Yet, we have to remember that in this consists the essential difference of the Christianity that differs her from all the other religions and beliefs: While in all the religions it is a man who is going on search of God relying solely on his strengths and efforts in order to find God, in Christianity, instead, *“in Jesus Christ, it is God himself who goes in search of the ‘stray sheep’, a suffering and lost humanity”* (Encyclical letter *“God is love”*, Benedict XVI). God, in the person of Jesus Christ, is going in search of us in order to bring to us the warmth of faith and sending us to proclaim the Gospel with renewed strength.

So today's Gospel is an invitation for us to live through the life of our Lord Himself, His suffering and death, in order to participate in His glorious resurrection.

During the feast of Baptism the Church is teaching us that Our Lord died to this world and was buried like a seed of grain in order to bring us the warmth of faith and hope in the everlasting salvation. St. Gregory the Great writes: *"Christ Himself is the grain of mustard seed, who, planted in the garden of the sepulcher, grew up in a great tree; He was the grain of seed in the humiliation of the flesh; He was a grain of seed when He died and a tree when He rose up again; a grain a seed in the humiliation of the flesh, a tree in the power of His majesty"*.

Following the teaching of St. Gregory the Great we can conclude, that the seed of faith planted in the garden the hearts of the believers has to be crushed as well so that it may bear fruit. In this world we as well called "to re-live" the humiliation of the flesh, persecutions, suffering in order to become *a tree in the power of His majesty*. It is only then that the birds will find a shelter beneath the branches of the grown tree and will be warmed in their faith. St. Gregory the Great continues: *"The birds lodge in its branches', when holy souls that raise themselves aloft from thoughts of earth on the winds of the virtues, breathe again from the troubles of this life in their words and comforting"*.

So, when our Lord calls the mustard seed the least of all the seeds of this world he speaks about the least reality of this world, reality that is meant to become the greater. This reality is our faith. While calling faith the least reality Our Lord challenges us. In fact, the faith will always remain the least reality unless we put it in practice, unless we are willing to live and suffer through the Sacred text.

In this Holy Mass let us ask through the intercession of Our Lady for the grace to warm the faith of those who live in this world without God through the example of our own life.