

SPIRITUAL LIFE

Increase Our Faith!

By: Chiara Lubich

This was urgent, heartfelt prayer of the disciples. They too wavered. How often we find in the Gospel that Jesus is reprimanding them for their little faith! (see Mt 8:26; 16:8, 17:20). Peter himself, “the rock” on which Jesus would build his Church, was admonished: “Oh you of little faith” (Mt 14:31). Jesus had to pray for him so that his faith would not fail (see Lk 22:32). This request for an increase in faith is really a prayer for each Christian because faith can fluctuate in the life of each one of us. Even St. Theresa of Lisieux, who throughout her lifetime had a very profound, filial relationship with God, was assailed by “a trial against faith” during the last year and a half of her life. She described it as if a wall raised up all the way to the heavens that even hid the stars (The Story of a Soul, Ms. C).

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The fact is that although we know that God is Love (see 1 Jn 4:8), we often live as if we were alone on this earth, as if we did not have a Father who loves us and who watches over us, who knows all about us, who even counts the hairs of our head (see Mt 10:30), who makes all things—the good we do and the trails we go through—work together for our good. We should be able to repeat with the Evangelist John: “We have come to know and to believe in the love God has for us” (1 Jn 4:16). To believe, in fact, is to feel that we are looked upon and loved by God, it is knowing that each of our prayers, every word, every move, every sad, joyful, or indifferent event, every illness, everything, everything, everything—from the things we consider important to the most insignificant actions, thoughts, and sentiments—everything is known to God. And since God is love, complete trust in him is the only logical response. Because of this confidence we can speak with him often, tell him about our concerns, our intentions, our plans. We can abandon ourselves to his love knowing that we will be understood, comforted, helped.

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To this prayer of the disciples, Jesus replied: “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to [this] mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you” (Lk 17:6). “The size of a mustard seed.” Whether great or small is not the most important aspect. Jesus wants our faith to be authentic, founded on him from whom we expect all things, without counting solely on our own abilities.

If we believe, and we believe in a God who loves us, nothing is impossible. We are then able to believe that indifference and selfishness, which we often find around us and in our own hearts, can be uprooted; that situations of disunity in the family can be resolved; that our world will start building unity among generations, among social levels, among Christians divided by centuries; that a worldwide fraternity can blossom among the faithful of different religions, among races and among people. We can also believe that humanity will one day live in peace. Yes, everything is possible if we allow God to act. For him, the all-powerful, nothing is impossible.

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How can we live this Word of Life and grow in faith? First of all, by praying, especially when difficulties and doubts arrive: faith is a gift of God. “Lord,” we can ask, “help me to remain in your love. Grant that I may not live a single moment without feeling, without being aware, without knowing through faith, or even through experience, that you love me, that you love us.” And then, by loving. By our efforts in loving, our faith will become firm and steadfast. We will not only believe in God’s love, but we will tangibly feel it in our soul, and we will see “miracles” take place around us. A girl from Great Britain experienced this: “When my mother told me that she had decided to leave my father and to move to another apartment, I was shattered by the news and almost desperate, but I didn’t say anything to her. In the past I would have searched for a means of escape; I would have locked myself in my room and listened to music. Instead, now that I have decided to live the Gospel, I felt drawn to remain there in the midst of that suffering and to say my ‘yes’ to the cross. The time had come for me to go beyond the events in themselves and believe in his love. “I tried to put aside my own opinions and to listen with love to my mother as she poured out all that she had to say about my father. I looked for a way to stay close to my father as well. “A few months later, when my parents were already on their way to re-building their relationship, I was touched by something my mother said: ‘Do you remember when I told you that I wanted to leave? Your reaction made me think that I was making the wrong decision.’ “I hadn’t said anything, only a ‘yes’ to Jesus in silence, confident that he would take care of everything.”

READINGS OF THE WEEK

Habakkuk 1:2-3;2:2-4

2 Timothy 1:6-14

Luke 17:5-10

October 6., 2013

「請 增 加 我 們 的 信 德 罷！」

盧 嘉 勒

這是耶穌的門徒急切而由衷的祈禱，因為他們的信德也不夠堅定。在福音中耶穌曾多次由於他們的信德薄弱而訓斥他們！（瑪 8：26；16：8；17：20）伯多祿雖號稱「磐石」，而教會亦將在他身上建立，但他也被耶穌叱責為：「小信德的人！」（瑪 14：31）耶穌還要為他祈禱，為叫他的信德不至喪失（路 22:32）。

這個增加信德的請求其實是每個基督徒心中的祈求，因為在我們每個人的生命中，亦會有信德動搖的時候。即使在聖女小德蘭的一生中，雖然她對天主懷有非常深厚的孝愛，但在她最後一年半的生命中，也受到「信德的試探」。她描述這試探就像一度延伸至天上的牆壁，它甚至遮蓋了星星（參閱靈心小史）。

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很多時，雖然我們知道天主是愛（若一 4:8），但我們的生活卻讓人感到好像獨個兒留在這個世上，好像那位愛我們、看顧我們的天父並不存在一樣。事實上，祂卻完全認識我們，甚至連我們的頭髮也一一數過（瑪 10:30）；祂促使我們行過的善事和所經歷過的考驗全為我們帶來益處。我們應該和聖史若望一起重複這句話：「我們認識了，且相信了天主對我們所懷的愛。」（若一 4:16）。事實上，相信天主就是去感受祂對我們的看顧和愛護，就是知道祂會照料我們的每事每物，包括我們每一個祈禱、每句說話、每個舉動、我們或憂傷、或喜樂、或冷漠的際遇，每種疾病，一切一切，從我們認為事關重大到微不足道的行動、想法和情緒，祂全都知曉。既然天主是愛，完全去信賴祂就是唯一合乎邏輯的回應。因著這種信任，我們時常可以跟祂說話，向祂傾訴我們的顧慮、我們的善志和我們的計劃。我們可以安心沉浸於祂的愛內，因為我們知道祂必會了解、安慰和幫助我們。

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對於門徒們的這個祈求，耶穌答覆說：「如果你們有信德像芥子那樣大，即使你們給這桑樹說：你連根拔出，移植到海中去！它也會服從你們的」（路 17:6）「像芥子那樣大」：其實信德的大或小並非最重要，耶穌所要求我們的是真切的，並以祂為基礎的信德。藉著祂，一切都會得到成就，我們不用再單靠自己的能力去行事。

如果我們相信，有一位天主在愛著我們，那麼就沒有不可能的事，我們可以相信那時常出現在我們身邊和心中的冷漠和自私，也將被連根拔起；家庭破裂的情況將得到解決；在兩代之間、不同的社會階級之間及分裂了數世紀的基督徒之間，將能締結合一；普世的手足情誼也將在不同的宗教、種族及民族之間綻放並結出成果？？此外，我們也可以相信人類終有一天能和平共處。是的，如果我們讓天主去介入和處理的話，一切都是可能的。為全能者天主來說，沒有不可能的事。

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那麼我們該如何生活這句聖言並在信德方面增長呢？

首先我們要祈禱，由其當我們感到困難和懷疑時，更需要祈禱，因為信德是天主的恩賜。我們可以祈求祂說：「上主，請幫助我存留在祂的愛內。讓我無時無刻都能透過信德或所經歷的事去感受、意識及知道祂愛我，和我們所有的人。」

其次，我們要實踐愛的工夫。透過努力去愛，我們的信德將變得堅定和隱固。我們不但會相信天主的愛，我們更將在自己的靈魂內觸摸到、感覺到祂的愛，並且在我們的周圍看見祂的愛所產生的種種「奇蹟」。

來自英國的一位女青年就有這份體驗：「當我的母親告訴我，她已決定離開父親並搬到另一處時，這個消息令我感到心碎，使我陷於絕望的邊緣，但是我沒有對她說任何的話。以往我會尋找逃避的方法，把自己鎖在房間中聽音樂。但是現在，既然我已經決定生活福音，我感到我要留下來，置身於他們的痛苦中，並且對十字架說：『我願意』。我感到我必須跨越自己，並在任何情況下都要相信祂的愛。」

「我嘗試放下自己的看法，以愛心去聆聽母親向我傾吐關於父親的一切。同樣，我也找尋方法去盡量留在父親的身邊。」

「數月後，當我的父母決定重修舊好時，母親說了一句話，令我深為感動。她說：『妳還記得嗎？當我告訴妳我要離開的時候，妳的反應使我感到我正在作出一個錯誤的決定。』」

「其實我沒有對她說過什麼，我只是默默的對耶穌說『我願意』，並相信祂自會照顧一切。」