



Mark 9:14-29

As Jesus came down the mountain with Peter, James, and John and approaching the other disciples, they saw a large crowd around them and scribes arguing with them. Immediately on seeing him, the whole crowd was utterly amazed. They ran up to him and greeted him. He asked them, "What are you arguing about with them?" Someone from the crowd answered him, "Teacher, I have brought to you my son possessed by a mute spirit. Wherever it seizes him, it throws him down; he foams at the mouth, grinds his teeth, and becomes rigid. I asked your disciples to drive it out, but they were unable to do so." He said to them in reply, "O faithless generation, how long will I be with you? How long will I endure you? Bring him to me." They brought the boy to him. And when he saw him, the spirit immediately threw the boy into convulsions. As he fell to the ground, he began to roll around and foam at the mouth. Then he questioned his father, "How long has this been happening to him?" He replied, "Since childhood. It has often thrown him into fire and into water to kill him. But if you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us." Jesus said to him, "'If you can!' Everything is possible to one who has faith." Then the boy's father cried out, "I do believe, help my unbelief!" Jesus, on seeing a crowd rapidly gathering, rebuked the unclean spirit and said to it, "Mute and deaf spirit, I command you: come out of him and never enter him again!" Shouting and throwing the boy into convulsions, it came out. He became like a corpse, which caused many to say, "He is dead!" But Jesus took him by the hand, raised him, and he stood up. When he entered the house, his disciples asked him in private, "Why could we not drive it out?" He said to them, "This kind can only come out through prayer."

Introductory Prayer: Lord Jesus, I believe in your presence in my life, family and work. I believe that you ask nothing of me that you do not give me the strength to do. I trust in the power of your grace and the care of your love. I love you, Lord, and I wish to. Help me love you with this prayer so that I may work according to your will and in your love.

Petition: I believe you can change me, Lord.

1. Working Without Faith: The artist Raphael depicts the poor apostles who, awaiting Our Lord's return from Mount Tabor and the Transfiguration, are waiving their arms in frustration and excusing themselves before the desperate father and his family. How often we try to do what clearly seems to be our work, but without including God in any real way. Our work seems "dead" until we let Jesus work with us to "raise it up." Often we fail even to ask whether what we do is God's will or not. When we exclude God from our work or family life, we lack faith. He is there—but we just don't allow him room to work. The apostles exercise little faith, thinking this cure beyond their ability. The father and his family may as well have lacked faith in what these "apostles" could do. To them, and to us, Christ says, "O faithless generation!" When do I show a lack of faith in my work or family life?

2. Jesus' Ultimate Intention: Instill Faith: When Jesus is out of sight, the people could only argue. Yet when he comes into view, the people are "utterly amazed." Jesus immediately sees their lack of faith, so he uses every circumstance to inspire faith. What he did for the chosen three apostles through the Transfiguration, he does now for the nine at the foot of the mountain. He allows them to fail so as to teach them faith. He tests the poor father, too: "If you can!" And he instructs all the apostles on the need for prayer. What is Christ doing in my life to invite me to greater faith? Do I respond with that faith or do I simply argue, since Jesus does not appear present?

3. Our Struggle to Believe: The father's heartfelt cry is all Jesus needs to drive out the unclean spirit. The man reaffirms his faith while admitting his weakness. How often do we assume that our faith is sufficient, all the while blaming God for what happens in our life? Believing is not easy. It requires a constant recognition of our limitations, our inability to understand the "why's" of so many occurrences, the "how's" of so many challenges. Jesus does not rebuke the struggle to believe but rather the lack of effort when we stop believing. What the apostles failed to do was done by the father with one intense but short prayer: "Help my unbelief!" This humble confession always comes to rest on the greatness of God's power and the comprehensiveness of his love. Do I believe that everything is possible if I only believe?

Conversation with Christ: Lord, grant me an increase of faith! Help me to see you present and active in my everyday life. May I never undertake any work or responsibility without first determining your will and counting on your assistance. I believe that you can do all things in me, according to your own will. I believe your will is committed to what is best for me. Teach me to pray and work with great faith and trust in you.

Resolution: I will reject all worries that I can do nothing about, confidently acting upon those concerns of mine which I can change.