

## E-BULLETIN #50

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*"Let the holiness of God shine forth" (cf. Mt 5,16)*

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item 97

### **FAITH – a saving relationship!**



I would like to begin my reflection saying faith is a personal response and personal commitment because it is our relationship with God, a saving relationship. We can explain and express the content of what we believe through the dogmas and the articulations of faith, but it becomes a saving relationship only when it is a personal act of response and commitment. Faith as response and commitment indicates an opening up of ourselves to the influence of God in the middle of what we experience, and our decision to be influenced by his word so that the power of God can bring certainty and restfulness to our lives.

Faith for Jesus was a life in the absolute conviction that God is here and now. It was his unshakable trust in the nearness or immediacy of God. It was this conviction that he tried to evoke in his listeners. He asked the paralytic whether he believed in the nearness of God. If he believed, he had to stand up and stretch out his hand and hold on to Him. This was so that the paralytic could experience that his faith in God was a saving and uplifting experience. It was this saving faith in his Father that helped him to live a life of freedom and detachment. He was not concerned about how successful he would be. But he knew for certain that his Father surrounded him with His providential care, an attitude that helped Jesus to overlook and endure any offense or suffering. In the face of criticism and betrayals, he was there the next day energized and doing good, having encountered God in his prayer. When he met his Father at the end of the day, he could listen to the voice as if being repeated "you are my son in whom I am well pleased."

We can outline three movements involved in this act of faith as personal response and commitment.

The first movement is the leaving of the past. We can cite the example of Abraham. The call of Abraham consisted in leaving all that was of the past. He was asked to leave everything so that he could be driven by God's presence, his promises and his providential care. He was asked to commit himself to the saving relationship with YHWH. The paradigm of Abraham's faith raises a question as to what drives us ahead. Sometimes we are driven by guilt like Cain of the Old Testament. Disconnected from God and driven by guilt he became listless, a wanderer and a fugitive in the world. At times we can be driven by resentment and anger, fear, material things and a need for appreciation. But the vanity of life cautions us about the foolishness of securing a life apart from God.



The second movement consists of setting out for a journey with God, not knowing exactly where one is heading to. As humans we plan. But there is a limit to our human planning. Therefore we need to yield to the promise of God because we are beckoned by the promise of God every day. When our relationship yields to God's relationship, our planning will cease to exist. We could cite the call of Moses. He had the old status of being a murderer. One day, seeing the bush resisting the flames, he becomes aware of the presence of God. He removes his sandals and encounters God. This encounter serves as a point of departure, meaning that from now on the threatening realities do not overpower him. He is somehow elevated from his listless existence to a role of a liberator. The threatening Egypt is there. His fellow Israelites are also present. But now he is able to rely upon the promise of God engraved on his heart. Therefore he returns to Egypt as a liberator. This is where faith becomes a saving relationship. When we have yielded to the promise of God, the earth becomes the palm of God reaching out for us to walk with Him. The sunshine becomes the warmth of God. Faith should beckon us to this reality.

The third movement of faith can be considered as our blessedness in God. It means drawing our value and dignity from God. It is an ever-abiding conviction that we are the children of God. Often we link our value to the things afore mentioned. Scripture is full of these promises and affirmations of God. Therefore, we are invited to find our value twenty four hours a day in God's affirmation that "you are my child in whom I am well pleased," so that we can continue to occupy the garden of God, believing that God has already made us worthy.

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