

Donnybrook

21 February 2022

Welcome

There is something very human about the Gospel today: a chronically ill child, an anxious parent driven to distraction, the failure of the disciples, the exasperation of Jesus and the ambiguous expression faith and unbelief.

Topic

For us today, we can easily resonate with the father's plea: I do have faith, help the little faith I have.

Steps

To outsiders, faith can often seem a matter of certainty, as if somehow we leave our doubts behind once we affirm our belief. We know, from our own experience, that that is not the case. We trust not because we are certain but because we are uncertain. We have precisely faith because we do not know. Faith and uncertainty go together. Even more, failure and faith go together, as we see with the disciples.

It helps to recall that faith, in this sense, is not assent to a body of doctrines, a catechism, but rather faith in a person, in the person of Jesus. This is very clear in our Gospel today: the father really trusts Jesus, that he can do something to help. At the same time, his trust is, well, trust and always incomplete. This is true of us as well. The words of the father's are ours: I do have faith, help my unbelief.

This ambiguous expression of faith means that faith can rise and fall, flourish and fade. It also means that we need to nourish our faith and to think about how we nourish it – by reading, by taking time out, by devoting time to it, by talking about it.

Conclusion

None of this means that our faith is somehow not genuine nor no real. Our trust in God and in Jesus is a relationship and, like all relationships, it evolves. It is grounded in our prayer. Prayer here means something more than the saying of prayers. It is the prayer of simply presence – simply being in the presence of God.