

SERMON

On the Gospel Reading of the 10th Sunday of Matthew (Mt. 17:14-23)

(9 August 2026)

Once again, today's Gospel reading raises the subject of faith, prompted by the healing of a young man who was suffering from demonic oppression. The desperate father brings his son to the Lord's disciples so that they might heal him, but they prove unable to perform such a cure.

Then we see Christ, who is gentle and humble, so meek that He willingly and without complaint accepts even death on the Cross, react with indignation at this situation. He can scarcely bear to remain among these people, whom He describes as a generation marked by unbelief and the corruption of heart. One wonders what the Lord would have to say about the unbelief and spiritual corruption of our own generation. Have we ever reflected on that? Yet the compassionate Lord has mercy on His suffering creature, who is afflicted by demonic influence, and He heals him, whereas His disciples had been unable to set the man free.

Naturally, this "failure" troubles the disciples. They discuss it among themselves, unable to find an explanation, and finally turn to their Teacher. This time Christ speaks in a different tone. He no longer uses the sharp rebukes He had spoken earlier, perhaps those had been intended to awaken them from their spiritual lethargy. Now He calmly explains the reason for their failure. His words are neither angry nor harsh, but neither does He soften the truth with pleasant expressions. His answer is direct and clear: "You failed because of your unbelief. Your faith is smaller even than a mustard seed, which can scarcely be seen with the naked eye. If you had even the smallest measure of true faith, you would move mountains, and nothing you asked would be impossible."

The Lord repeatedly returns to the subject of faith in many different situations because it is fundamental. Without faith, a person cannot be saved, not only from bodily illness, but above all from spiritual sickness. Without faith, no one can ever escape the vicious cycle of sin. Yet the Lord knows that human faith is weak and changeable. To strengthen it, He proposes two "weapons," as we might call them, which help faith to grow. This teaching is not meant only for the disciples or for that particular occasion; it applies to every person in every age.

For our faith to increase and become firmly established, it requires fasting and prayer. The Lord's call to fasting does not simply mean refraining from certain foods. Rather, it means a broader restraint from becoming enslaved to our bodily appetites, freeing ourselves from the domination of the passions that trouble us, and gaining freedom from the tyranny of physical necessity. When a person loosens this passionate attachment to material things, the mind and understanding become purified and refined. Then the soul begins to enter into the realm of true prayer. And when someone approaches prayer under these conditions and experiences its sweetness, detachment from earthly things becomes much easier. In other words, fasting and

prayer are inseparably linked; that is why the Lord places them side by side with equal importance.

Therefore, dear brothers and sisters, what we need is faith—faith that, if it is genuine, can move even mountains. Faith means nothing less than entrusting our entire life and our whole being to Christ with complete confidence. Perhaps we struggle. Perhaps we have not yet reached that level of spiritual maturity. But we must not lose heart. Through fasting and prayer to the Lord, our minds will gradually be enlarged and become more receptive to the love of Christ. Then the seed of faith will grow and bear fruit in our hearts. Amen.