

Homily: Feb. 20, 2023

By Fr. Virgil Petermeier, osc

We celebrate our God who is both powerful love and wise compassion as he continues to shower us with loving wisdom. We do not always act according to God's wisdom. So we come to our compassionate God calling out. Lord have mercy.

Sirach praises wisdom, created through the Holy Spirit by the one and only Lord of all. God poured wisdom upon all creation, on every living thing, especially every human being. God's wisdom is not narrow, consisting only in an abundance of knowledge, but the wisdom of being **lovingly wise** in all circumstances, especially difficult situations.

We witness such loving wisdom in Jesus. On the one hand, Jesus was frustrated by a society—a generation—which didn't understand faith as the basis for healing. Instead, the scribes, the people, and Jesus' disciples may have been arguing about some magical formula or prayer not said correctly, causing the boy to continue suffering from the evil spirit.

Interestingly, Jesus did not immediately exorcise the evil spirit but connected compassionately with the father by asking about the boy's circumstances. "How long has this been going on?"

Then the father says, "If you can do anything, have compassion on us and help us."

Jesus responds by repeating the father's "if you can?" and adds the crucial clarification and call, "Everything is possible to one who has faith."

It strikes me that since the father's focus was on "you," namely on Jesus, Jesus's neutral but wise answer seems to point to himself, the boy's father, and to all the people. "Everything is possible to one who has faith."

The father, in all humility, picks up on Jesus' statement, saying, "I do believe. Help

my unbelief." The father's plea for fuller belief seems to be a wise, appropriate, and humble statement we all need to express.

The father's prayer, "I do believe; help my unbelief," points to that humble realization that our belief is always compromised. His prayer also intimates a confidence that God can act and heal despite our faith being compromised and limited by all sorts of egoistic motivations. Such a realization helps us rely and depend more sincerely on God. We consciously set those motivations aside by repeating that father's prayer.

So let us together reiterate the father's simple prayer: "I do believe. Help my unbelief." (2-3Xs)