

## SEEDS OF FAITH?

Jesus said that if you have faith like a mustard seed you can move mountains. From that it is concluded by many that slight belief is all that is needed. But he does not say that. If you have a weak faith because you didn't try to develop it then you are condemned by the parable about the servant who buried the talents instead of trying to invest them and use them wisely.

Jesus was not saying that weak faith is fine but that God likes faith so much that if all you can manage even with his help is a little that he can reward that faith by doing miracles for it.

Some argue that if Catholics who have become atheists want to get married, Catholics must still encourage them to get married in a Roman Catholic Church. They argue that if they agree to do it, it indicates that there may be some seeds of faith in them. That cannot be presumed. Nobody can know if an ex-believer really has those seeds. And it is patronising and therefore intolerant to say they have. And the atheist will have more in common with a liberal "Christian" minister and Church than Catholicism. If you want religion involved, then the only reason you would encourage them towards a Catholic ceremony is to please yourself and you may have a sectarian view of other faiths.

And the seeds of faith or a slight faith is not necessarily a good thing. Good religion will prioritise encouraging people to do good. To assume a person has the seeds and is entitled to Church privileges is really just saying, "A bit of belief will do and it does not, apart from that, matter what a person believes."

The Catholic Church is forbidden to baptise the children of people who will not raise them as Catholic. It does not consider supposing that the seeds of faith are in the parents if they ask for the baptism. Scripture is clear that some people have no faith. James 2 says that faith without works is dead and useless. And the Church says that having the seeds of belief is not the same as having the seeds of faith. The Devil, as James 2 points out, has a very strong belief. The Devil would in fact have more certainty that God exists than anybody on earth. If a person has some belief that is no good to a religion that understands faith as not just belief but as a loving commitment too.

People who genuinely respect the faith or non-belief of others will not encourage them to engage in ceremonies that contradict that faith or non-faith such as say Catholic marriage or baptism. Going to Church is going to Church but getting married in Church or getting baptised implies that you are not being true to yourself or your beliefs or your principles. No, are you respectful to the Church which requires faith and sincerity.

You can respect a person's faith that differs from your own in the sense that you refuse to laugh at it or ridicule it or expect them to do something that contradicts it. You can respect a view and challenge it. Challenging is not abuse or disrespect.