

Cycle C 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1 HAB 1:2-3; 2:2-4

How long, O LORD? I cry for help but you do not listen! I cry out to you, “Violence!” but you do not intervene. Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery? Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord. Then the LORD answered me and said: Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets, so that one can read it readily. For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint; if it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late. The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.

Responsorial Psalm PS 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice: “Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works.”

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2 2 TM 1:6-8, 13-14

Beloved: I remind you, to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, nor of me, a prisoner for his sake; but bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God. Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us.

Gospel LK 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our faith.” The Lord replied, “If you have faith the size of a mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, ‘Be uprooted and planted in the sea,’ and it would obey you. “Who among you would say to your servant who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field, ‘Come here immediately and take your place at table’? Would he not rather say to him, ‘Prepare something for me to eat. Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink. You may eat and drink when I am finished’? Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? So should it be with you. When you have done all you have been commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do.’”

When I was very young, maybe only 5 or 6 years old, we lived on a busy street that I couldn't cross alone to go to my friend's house. One day when I was at his house I noticed a Bible in their living room. As little boys are apt to do, I asked why they had a Bible when they didn't believe in God? I didn't get much of an answer as I recall. Later that day when I got home, however, my mother collared me and asked why I had said such a thing to my friend. I replied that I knew they didn't believe in God because the family didn't go to church on Sunday. My mother explained why my logic was faulty and told me to never to say such a thing again because it could embarrass other people and make them feel bad. It wasn't a very good way to share my faith in God. Each of us knows many people, good and generous and loving people who don't have the faith that we have. Today the Scriptures tell us God loves us so much that He gives us faith...it is more just than a wonderful gift of believing in Him, however...it is a grace that allows us to freely respond to God every day, in good times and in bad. Bold and enduring faith is nurtured within a community of believers with the gifts of power and love and self-control that God gives us. We Christians are called to serve others, especially those with little faith. We are expected to share the experience of God's love.

Many times I am sure that we feel like the apostles who asked Jesus to increase their faith. The apostles were concerned with quantity. Jesus focused on quality. He told them the faith they already had was so powerful that it could uproot trees. The good news is that when we trust in this gift of faith, we serve without reservation and miracles can happen. We Christians are expected to serve patiently in God's time and to share the joy of faith that comes by bearing hardships with the strength that God gives us....it's what we do.

Even when we have been intent on serving God, however, difficult circumstances can overwhelm us. As faithful Christians we will be called to endure periods of time when we feel abandoned by God. Our broken hearts and strained spirits cry out to God like

Habakkuk in the 1st reading, Why God? How long can this go on? We are called to endure faithfully, waiting for an answer that we are assured will come.

If you have never experienced being fired, or as they call it being downsized, consider yourself blessed, not just lucky. I recall meeting some neighbors at a party and one of them said he had been out of work for 7 months. I remember wondering why he couldn't just go out there and get a job...he must be doing something wrong...I was confident with my degrees in electrical engineering and an MBA, and my management experience was good insurance...and I always called on the Holy Spirit as my headhunter, praying for His help whenever I was job-hunting. Then the sword fell and I was downsized. Soon my confidence and a comfortable severance package melted away. Panic set in as survival mode became a reality for my family. I remember crying my eyes out when I landed a short consulting job for \$10,000...it was more money than I had earned in nearly 9 months. It was a time of incredible stress and sacrifice. On those tedious days when rejection after rejection had worn me out, I remember reaching into myself searching for God...I called to him begging for some relief...it took 13 months and 3 days to find a job. A true blessing that happened during this time was a friend asking me to attend a men's fellowship on Friday's at 7AM. I couldn't imagine why anyone would want to meet that early in the morning...but, I went to network, I needed a job...what I discovered, however was group Bible study and that's what kept me going back for nearly 7 years. That stressful time didn't consume me...it turned out to be a time of hardship when my flame of faith was stirred like Timothy's in the 2nd reading and my relationship to God came into focus as a priority more than ever before.

While faith is a personal act, it is not an isolated act. The Catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that we can't believe alone any more than we can live alone. Our love for Jesus and our neighbor compels us to share our faith. Each believer is a link in the great chain of believers. As a young boy something prompted me to speak out about faith in God....the Holy Spirit made me do it! And as I struggled to find a job, I

benefited from my friend's faith when he invited me to that men's fellowship. We are the ones who faith was given, so we are called to serve and share our faith. And those good people that we know without much faith, maybe, just maybe, they haven't yet met someone who has shared God's gift of faith...maybe that someone is us. As Scriptures told us today, we Christians are expected to serve patiently in God's time and to share the joy of faith that comes by bearing hardships with the strength that God gives us....it's what we do.