

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

The readings of this Sunday invite us to an enduring faith that is grounded in God and his grace. The first reading describes the cry of Israel before God with regard to the destruction of their country and the besieging of Jerusalem. In face of all those difficulties and challenges, the prophet Habakkuk consoles his fellow citizens and encourages them to persevere in the Lord. He reminds them that anyone who, because of suffering, gives up his faith has no integrity. The just, however, shall live because of his faith.

The point Habakkuk brings is to remind us that suffering and misery are enemies of faith. However, these cannot destroy us, because if we remain firm in our faith, we will certainly live. If so, we have to take advantage of all the circumstances surrounding our life and make them an opportunity of growing in the Lord.

Another point is the idea that God never disappoints those who have faith in him. Such a faith, however, is not of our making, but a gift of God, which has to grow and become mature in us. Like love, faith has its moments of doubts and crisis. Whatever might be these moments, however, we must never despair, but keep our faith in God as our stronghold in time of darkness and challenge.

All that helps us understand why St Paul is encouraging Timothy, his son in the Lord and a coworker, to stir up in him the gift of faith received through the imposition of his Hands. He reminds him how he did not receive a spirit of cowardice, but of power, love and self-control. Therefore, he should not be ashamed to bear witness to the Lord Jesus and to accept his lot of hardships for the Gospel with the help of the Holy Spirit.

Because difficulties and challenges can shake our faith, the apostles ask Jesus to increase their faith. To increase faith means to make it capable of understanding that God does not abandon us, even if we go through dark moments and hardships in our life. It means also to be convinced that as bad as we might have it, we are not alone. God is with us; he accompanies us in each step of our life, sometimes encouraging us mysteriously so that we might not give up on life; at other times consoling us openly through the help of friends and relatives so that we remain serene in spite of our suffering and difficult situation.

Understood as God's gift, faith is a powerful force that can make the impossible become possible. That is why Jesus says in the Gospel that if we have faith as small as a grain of mustard, we can uproot big trees and change the world.

By referring to faith that uproots the big mulberry tree, Jesus is not calling us to use faith in order to force God to do whatever we like or whatever we want. In fact, faith is not a means to be used in order to obtain at cheap cost all kinds of things we want. Faith does not even move any material object as a magnet does.

What Jesus would like to tell us is that faith is capable of achieving what looks impossible to human eyes. It finds solutions for situations that appear totally and definitely out of control.

When there is nothing else to do or to expect, faith can change all that in a very surprising way and to our own astonishment. Genuine faith can bring quite unexpected things to happen to us.

As psychological observation has shown, when people approach things with faith, trust and confidence, what they believe can really happen to them. We have seen it many times in sports and diverse fields of work. How many scientific marvels have been achieved by people who believed against any prediction that they can make it? How many sportsmen and women have come to victory because they did not doubt one instance that it can happen to them? That is why; we must always remember that no task is too difficult for us when we approach it with faith in God. We must always remember that we are not confronting difficulties alone, but with God and all his power.

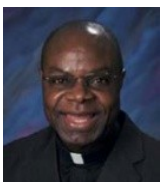
Whatever might be the size of our faith or its depth, it cannot, however, push us to claim any reward from God because we have it. When we have fulfilled many duties because they have been required by our faith, we have done only what we should do.

In truth, God does not owe us anything, because we have faith in him. What we receive from him is pure grace and gift for which we have to be happy and thankful to him. In the same way, what we do in the name of our faith in him is just what we should do, because it is so. When we understand this truth, we become free men and women who act gratuitously by doing good things beyond a pursuit of interest and reward.

When we have done our best, we have only done our duty. And those who have done their duty have done only what, in any event, they could be compelled to do. That is the mystery of Jesus' Kingdom, namely that we gratefully do our duty; we are useless servants who hope for God's graciousness. This is also the law of love. When we love, we do a lot of things that the love of our beloved ones dictates us. After we have done them, there is no claim to raise. We have done only what we should do in our love. We have done what love has compelled us to do.

This is most of the time the case with the bringing up of our children and the sacrifices we accept for them. No parent is giving the best of himself for the children for a certain interest he wants to reap. Rather, he/she does everything with the whole of his/her heart, because his/her duty requires so. All that helps understand why Jesus says, "When you have done all you have been commanded, say "We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do".

Let us pray the Father to give us a bold faith amid the crises and the challenges of life. Let us ask him to help us grow in the understanding that we have to fulfill our duties out of love and not out of interest. May God bless you all!



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Habakkuk 1, 1-3; 2, 2-4; 2Timothy 1, 6-8, 13-14; Luke 17, 5-10