

## Twenty Seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time C2022

Let me start today's homily with a reference to human life. Human life is a long journey made up of ups and downs, successes and failures, joy and sadness, easiness and difficulties, etc. In the course of this long journey only those who are patient, tenacious and perseverant can come to the end of the race and win victory. In spite of all the difficulties they meet in their journey, they know that there is no other way to come to victory than to pass through challenges and remain perseverant.

Like human life, faith is also a long journey. Like human life, it has also the moments of brightness and darkness, doubt and certainty, crisis and difficulties. The one who wins the battle of faith is that one who is patient and courageous, perseverant and faithful to God in spite of the meanders of human life.

That is what Habakkuk tells his compatriots who complain about the difficulties of their life and the besieging of Jerusalem. Their country is ruined by violence, destruction and discord. They do not know what to do than to call upon God. God promises his intervention, but they have to be patient and wait until it will be fulfilled. As they want things to be fixed quickly, the prophet reminds them that: "The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live." Faith is understood here as trust and confidence in God and not knowledge of the things of God.

Faith as trust in God is what we really need. Our faith has to grow and mature; it has to pass from faith as knowledge of the things of God to faith as trust in God. If we come to that level, our faith will become a source of strength and comfort in time of darkness and challenge.

Then, we understand the insistence of St Paul in the second reading as he encourages Timothy, his son in the Lord and a coworker, to stir up in him the gift of God 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. He exhorts him to 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.

Given that difficulties and challenges of life can shake our faith, in today's Gospel 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 when we go through dark moments and hardships in 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 hardships.

To increase faith means equally to make it capable of seeing the world with the eyes of God; to judge each situation in which we are involved with the mind and the spirit of God; to consider the happenings of our life mostly at the light of Jesus' word.

Then, we can understand that faith is a powerful force that can make the impossible become possible. Jesus rends it this way: "If you have faith the size of mustard seed, you would say to this mulberry tree, 'Be uprooted and planted in the sea' and it will obey.

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. 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. Faith can bring unexpected things to happen to us. Even a little dose of faith can direct our lives, comfort us when we are discouraged and challenge us when we are complacent.

As the psychology of 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 inventions have been achieved by people who believed against the odds 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?

Whatever might be the size of our faith or its shape, 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 for which we have to be happy, and thankful to him. What we do in the name of our faith is just what we should do, because it is so. When we understand that truth, we become free men and women who act gratuitously by doing good things beyond any 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 rise. 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 gives the best of himself to his children for a certain interest he wants to reap. Rather, he does everything with the whole of his heart, because his 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 Christian duties out of love and not out of interest. God bless you.

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



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