

Twenty-seventh Sunday Ordinary Time

The first reading from the prophet Habakkuk has a sound of great distress in it (see Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4). Habakkuk cries out, "How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen! . . . 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." It sounds as if the prophet Habakkuk had written these words in our own time. Many of us probably look at what is happening in our country, and in the world, and wonder the same thing. I cry for help, I pray, but it seems as if God does not listen. I look at our country and I see it falling apart, especially morally. There is definitely strife and clamorous discord. Why does God seem to remain so silent?

Well, the second half of the first reading gives us a clue. The first reading continues. God says, "Write down the vision . . . 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." So, what we can gather from this is that God is in control. He knows what is going on. He knows what is happening. God tells His people not to worry. He has a plan, and that plan will have a good outcome. It may seem like everything is out of control, and that evil and darkness reign; but God assures His people: This is only for a short time. Things will change for the better.

God also tells His people, "The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live." This is also an important message for all of us. The rash one, or the impatient person, has no integrity. The impatient person tends to try to take matters into his or her own hands. The impatient person usually tries to find a solution as quickly as possible. Impatience usually leads to something being done poorly, and sometimes settling for a poor outcome just to try to get something out of the way. Unfortunately, this usually doesn't lead to something getting out of the way. It usually makes things worse, and might even drag things out even longer. The impatient person may try to make alliances with some people that he or she shouldn't make alliances with in order to help reach a solution. (It sounds a lot like politics today, doesn't it?) The Israelites were well known for trying to form alliances with neighboring countries in order to defend themselves against an enemy. God constantly warned to turn to Him alone for help. But Israel many times keep turning to other countries for help rather than God. When the Israelites did this, it always turned out poorly for them.

In the first reading we heard God say, "the just one, because of his faith, shall live." Because of his faith! The just one will live because of his or her faith that God is in control. God is aware of what is happening. God hears our prayers. Do we have faith? Do we believe this? In our Gospel reading the Apostles said to Jesus, "Increase our faith." (see Lk 17:5-10) What a great request! Who doesn't need their faith increased? Wouldn't it be nice to have a faith so strong that we could look at what is happening in our country and calmly say, "No problem, God has got everything under control. God will take care of everything." Don't most of us feel a little like Habakkuk? We might feel a little panicked, maybe even a little helpless. The future may look a little too dark for us.

Jesus answered His apostles request by telling them, "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." Someone today might say to Jesus, "That's not the answer I want to hear! Come on, can't you do better than that!" But it is an excellent answer. Jesus is telling His disciples that God can do anything, such as uprooting a huge tree, roots and all, and planting it in the sea. If you even have the tiniest amount of faith to believe that God can do this, then it can happen. Jesus is saying that God is capable of doing anything. We just have to believe that He can do it. We can look at the condition that our country is in, or the world, and if we have the tiniest amount of faith that God will take care of things, then God will do it. But it takes faith, and it takes patience. The impatience person has no integrity because the impatience person tends to lack faith. The patience person has faith that God is in control and is willing to wait for God's plan to come to fulfillment. Not only must we be patient, but also have to keep praying. We can't just sit idly by and expect God to take care of everything. No, we have to keep praying for conversion, repentance, peace, and concord. This vision still has its time. It presses on to fulfillment. It will not disappoint. If it delays, wait for it, for it will surely come. We pray: Lord, increase our weak faith. Help us to be strong in our faith and to trust that you are always in control. That despite the seemingly chaotic nature of our world, You will bring about Your Kingdom of peace, love, and mercy. May we always walk in the light of Your grace, knowing and trusting that You are with us even to the end of time.