

We are in Ordinary Time, which is the time in the Church when it's not Advent, Christmas, Lent, Easter, or a feast day. There's a word: *ordinary*. Since every Sunday is a special day in the Church, ordinary in this case simply indicates that the Sundays are in order. They are counted. So today is the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time...on *October 2nd* already. Doesn't it seem like we were in flip flops at the pool or beach just yesterday? Yet already we're almost a *month* into the school year. We have Hallowe'en in just four weeks, then Thanksgiving after that. Christmas is in less than three months. And before you know it, you'll be saying, "Have a nice summer," to your teacher all over again.

Of course, the start of summer vacation is always good news. But there has been a lot of bad news lately. In fact, there is always bad news. So why does God let this bad stuff happen? Did you ever think about that? Well, Habakkuk did. Who in the world is Habakkuk, you might ask? Well, since you asked, Habakkuk was a prophet, a special person who hears the word of God and tells it to his people, including *us* through the Bible. Today's first reading, which usually comes from the Old Testament (the one which occurs before Jesus' birth), is from the book of Habakkuk.

A reading from the book of the prophet Habakkuk (Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4)

This was my prayer to God: "Our Lord, how long must I beg for Your help before You Listen? You won't help when I tell You about all of the violence. Why do You make me watch such terrible injustice? Violence and destruction, crime and cruelty are spreading everywhere." ¶ Then the Lord told me, "I will give you my message in the form of a vision. Write it on a big clay tablet, and make it easy to read. At the time I have

chosen, these things will happen. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting, because it will happen. I don't like proud people, but everyone who is FAITHful will please Me and live." The Word of the Lord.

So Habakkuk had evil in his world, some 600 years before Jesus was born. But there's nothing different about that. Unfortunately, there has always been evil in the world. Habakkuk asked God, what's with all this evil? Why are You letting it happen? God said in response (remember that Habakkuk was a prophet, so he could hear the Word of God), "At the time I have chosen, these things will happen. You can trust what I say about the future. It may take a long time, but keep on waiting, because it will happen." Again, "You can trust what I say." In other words, God was telling Habakkuk (and us) to have FAITH in Him. There's another word: *FAITH*. A good working definition of FAITH is complete trust or confidence in someone, someone like...God. But when it comes to God, what is that trust based upon? Certainly nothing that you or I have ever seen. Did you ever see God perform in a concert? Did you ever see God on television? Did you ever see God march in a parade? Or perhaps you have heard about God from your parents or grandparents, or from others who have discussed scripture or our FAITH with you. And don't forget the priests. And everyone who is telling it to you is getting it from the Bible. St. Paul says in his letter to the Romans (Romans 10:17—not this week's reading), "FAITH comes from what is heard, and what is heard comes from the Word of Christ." So FAITH is passed on from the Bible through all of us to you, so that you can believe and trust in this wonderful, all powerful, and all loving God despite all this evil and misery which always seems to be all around us.

But there is something else. When it comes to coping with the evil in the world, we know something that Habakkuk did not know, because it hadn't happened yet. We know what a

miserable experience Jesus had at the end of His life. Look what God let happen to Jesus, His *Son!* All that evil and violence and misery that happened to Jesus when He died God did not stop from happening. The night before He died, Jesus asked God if it were possible to spare Him of the suffering He was about to endure. Even *Jesus* asked God to stop the misery if He could. But God did not, which ultimately was a good thing for us. It is *because* Jesus died for our sins that we get a chance to have everlasting life. Jesus was human, so He didn't want to die any more than you or I want to die. But He said to God, "not My will, but Yours be done." Jesus had FAITH that if God wanted to let the violence happen, He had a good reason. Again, Jesus had FAITH in His Father. Likewise, God said to Habakkuk, "You can trust what I say...It may take a long time, but keep on waiting, because it will happen." Have FAITH.

Today's psalm, Psalm 95, is a very important psalm in the Church. If you pay attention, you will hear this psalm frequently at Mass.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7abcd, 7e-9)

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Sing joyful songs to the Lord! Praise the mighty rock where we are safe. Come to worship him with thankful hearts and songs of praise.

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Bow down and worship the Lord our Creator! The Lord is our God, and we are His people, the sheep He takes care of in His own pasture.

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

Listen to God's voice today! Don't be stubborn and rebel as your ancestors did at Meribah and at Massah out in the desert. For forty years they tested God and saw the things He did.

If today you hear God's voice, harden not your hearts.

So Psalm 95 says that we should not be "hard hearted" with God. We should trust in Him. See how He has taken care of His people? We need to have FAITH in God.

The second reading comes, as it often does, from St. Paul.

A reading from the second letter of St. Paul to Timothy (2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14)

I ask you to make full use of the gift that God gave you when I placed my hands on you. Use it well. God's Spirit does not make cowards out of us. The Spirit gives us power, love, and self-control. ¶ Don't be ashamed to speak for our Lord. And don't be ashamed of me, just because I am in jail for serving him. Use the power that comes from God and join with me in suffering for telling the good news. ¶ Take as normal what you heard me say in the FAITH and love that are in Jesus. Guard this trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within each of us. The Word of the Lord.

St. Paul was writing to Timothy from jail. Of course, it was not good news that he was in jail. He told Timothy not to be ashamed, just because Paul was in jail for speaking about Jesus. Even from jail Paul said he had FAITH in Jesus, and that Timothy needed to guard this trust, this FAITH, with the help of the Holy Spirit that each one of us has within us.

Before the gospel, there is the gospel acclamation:

Alleluia, Alleluia. *Alleluia, Alleluia.*

The word of the Lord stands forever; it is the word given to you, the good news.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

A reading from the holy gospel according to St. Luke (Luke 17:5-10).

The apostles said to the Lord, “make our FAITH stronger!” ¶ Jesus replied, “If you had faith no bigger than a tiny mustard seed, you could tell this mulberry tree to pull itself up, roots and all, and to plant itself in the ocean. And it would! ¶ “If your servant comes in from plowing or from taking care of the sheep, would you say, ‘Welcome! Come on in and have something to eat’? No you wouldn’t say that. You would say, ‘Fix me something to eat. Get ready to serve me, so I can have my meal. Then later on you can eat and drink.’ ¶ “Servants don’t deserve special thanks for doing what they are supposed to do. And that’s how it should be with you. When you’ve done all you should, then say, ‘We are merely servants, and we have simply done our duty.’” The gospel of the Lord.

Here is *Jesus* speaking about FAITH. In fact, what He says in today’s gospel is one of the most famous things He ever says about FAITH. When His apostles ask Him to make their FAITH stronger, He tells them that if they have FAITH the size of a mustard seed, “you could tell this mulberry tree to pull itself up, roots and all, and plant itself in the ocean, and it would.” You may have eaten a bagel with poppy seeds, those tiny black seeds on the surface of the bagel. Mustard seeds are smaller than that. Now, understand that Jesus doesn’t expect you to measure FAITH the same way you measure the size of a mustard seed. A mustard seed is something you find in nature or

in a biology class. FAITH is a characteristic of one's belief. Jesus is using something called hyperbole. There's *another* word: *hyperbole*. Hyperbole is when you exaggerate or overstate in order to make a point. Earlier we talked about flip flops when we said, "we were in flip flops at the pool or beach just yesterday." So in October, it is doubtful that anyone was at the pool or beach yesterday. But that statement gave you an idea of how recently summer seemed to be. Other examples of hyperbole: I am so hungry I could eat a horse; if I told you once I've told you a thousand times; your backpack is so heavy it must weigh a ton. Jesus' hyperbole about the tiny mustard seed showed His apostles how strong FAITH could be and what you could accomplish with it, even if you had just an itchy-bitsy amount of it.

So in today's Bible readings, God is telling Habakkuk how important it is to have FAITH in Him. The psalm tells us not to have hard hearts, but to have FAITH in God. We have Paul who, even though he was in *jail*, still had FAITH in God. And Jesus tells us that all you need is just a little bit of FAITH in God. And the bonus we have is Jesus' example of the FAITH He had in God even though He was being tortured and crucified. So have FAITH in God even when everything else doesn't seem like good news.

And that, girls and boys, is the lesson in today's readings. Be sure to talk about it with your parents.

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2022
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