

# Faith that Serves

## I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

### FIRST READING (Hb 1:2-3; 2:2-4)

<sup>2</sup>How long, O LORD, must I cry for help?/ and you do not listen?/ Or cry out to you, “Violence!”/ and you do not intervene?/ <sup>3</sup>Why do you let me see iniquity?/ why do you simply gaze at evil?/ Destruction and violence are before me;/ there is strife and discord. <sup>2</sup>Then the LORD answered me and said:/ Write down the **vision**;/<sup>a</sup> Make it plain upon tablets,/ so that the one who reads it may run.

<sup>3</sup>For the **vision** is a witness for the appointed time,/ a testimony to the end; it will not disappoint./ If it delays, wait for it,/ it will surely come, it will not be late./ <sup>4</sup>See, the rash have no integrity;/<sup>b</sup> but the just one who is righteous because of faith shall live.\*

**THE FOCUS: The Vision (of violence) of Habakkuk**

### COMMENTARY

- Habakkuk prophesies sometime before King Josiah’s death (around 600 BC).
- The prophet laments, cries out because he cannot take what he sees. Very appalling! Terrible! (or *Mitindi! Nakakapanggilalas!*)
- Vv.2-3 enumerate what Habakkuk sees: violence, ruin, misery, destruction, violence, strife, discord.
- V.2 expresses the prophet’s helplessness. He is disappointed at God’s silence. He accuses God of not listening.
- In 2:v.2 God finally answers the prophets and gives instruction.
- To write the vision clearly...
- V.3 describes the nature of the vision: has its time, it will surely come to pass, will not disappoint, if late (wait for it).
- V.4 contrasts the rash man (no integrity) and the just man (has faith, will live).
- We must pay attention to “faith” because this will be the theme of Sunday’s liturgy.

### REFLECTIONS

The text reflects the feeling of Habakkuk.



It is not easy for him to see in advance the impending disaster that will befall them.

He talks to God. It is too much for him.

Why does God allow him to suffer from knowing or seeing these terrible things? This prophet sees visions.

When God talks to the prophet, he affirms the visions will soon come true.

The just ones, those who have faith will survive, but those who are not will perish.

Those who do not have integrity will disintegrate. The prophetic vision is a warning to those who live a disintegrated life (schizophrenic life, double life, no consistency, insincere) The prophetic vision is an encouragement to the just who have faith in God.

### RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9)

**IF TODAY YOU HEAR HIS VOICE,  
HARDEN NOT YOUR HEARTS.**

### SECOND READING (2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14)

<sup>6d</sup>For this reason, I remind you to stir into flame the **gift of God**\* that you have through the imposition of my hands. <sup>7e</sup>For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control. <sup>8f</sup>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. <sup>13k</sup>Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus. <sup>14l</sup>Guard this rich trust with the help of the holy Spirit that dwells within us.

**THE FOCUS: The Gift of God**

**COMMENTARY**

- Paul, the apostle, encourages Timothy to make the gift of God work. (stir into the flame, v.6)
- The gift of God is communicated to him through the imposition of his hands (confirmation).
- The gift of God is the spirit of power, love and self-control, not the spirit of cowardice (V.7).
- V.8 is the reality if Timothy allows the gift of God to work:
  - Not ashamed to testify to the Lord, to Paul.
  - Able to bear hardships like Paul because of the gospel.
- V.13 talks about norm (standard, measuring stick for holiness) = the sound words of Paul, his teachings.
- “In faith and love...” qualifies the imperative “take.”
- V.14 talks about “rich trust” (full trust and confidence)

**REFLECTIONS**

Paul reminds us to make the gift of God alive. God’s gift is something to be shared. It is an energy that drives us to give testimony, to speak out for God.

No one who is gifted should keep quiet and remain uninvolved in the church and in the world.

Fear, timidity and withdrawal have no place in the church. We, like Timothy, must do our obligation to preach and testify with courage.

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**GOSPEL READING (Lk 17:5-10)**

**Faith**

<sup>5</sup>And the apostles said to the Lord, “Increase our **faith**.” <sup>6d</sup>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.

**Being servants**

<sup>7e</sup>“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?’ <sup>8</sup>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?’ <sup>9</sup>Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded? <sup>10</sup>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.’”

**THE FOCUS: Faith**

**COMMENTARY**

- The Gospel Reading is about two things: *faith* and *being a servant*. There seems to be no connection between the two.
- In v.5 the apostles themselves ask the Lord to increase their faith. Why? Is their faith small and weak?
- Jesus employs a short parable or imagery to portray what a faith can do no matter how small it is.
- The size of a mustard seed is very small, mulberry tree very big.
- When you have faith even small one only, you can do the impossible.
- In a question form, v.7 hypothetically puts the apostles as masters: “who among you would say to your servant”... farmer or shepherd?
- The expected answer: no one.
- In another question, in v.8, the master will not allow his servant to eat with him, but gives a commands to prepare food and to serve at table. The servant will eat later.
- The expected answer: I agree.
- In v.9, another question is formulated on being grateful on the part of the master.
- The expected answer: No. The master has no “utang na loob” (not indebted) to his servant.
- V.10 provides a conclusion to the 3 questions. Meaning, the apostles likewise, as servants, will not expect special treatment from the master (Jesus).

**REFLECTIONS**

The Gospel Reading talks about the power of faith. Though it may be small, it has the power to do the impossible. Faith is a gift from God. If we feel we don’t have enough faith, we pray that it may increase (become stronger). Strong faith can sustain us in times of trial and in our work as missionaries and servants of the kingdom.

All Christians are like the apostles, servants of the Lord.

We can only relax (eat and drink) after the master says so.

Christians should not expect anything in return. We are just useless servants, not really useless but unworthy to demand recognition. Jesus does not owe us anything.

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## II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about visions of violence, but it has an important note to those who have faith. They will survive.

The Second Reading talks about making the gift of God work. We must listen to God in the faith and love in Christ Jesus.

The Gospel Reading talks about faith and servanthood.

### How to develop your sharing/homily

Relate how strong or weak your faith is. Have you ever lost your faith? How did you get it back?

What happened when you lost your faith? Were you better off?

The Gospel Reading encourages us to imitate the prayer of the apostles: "Lord, increase our faith."

It is a prayer of someone who finds himself helpless in the midst of overwhelming difficulties.

It is a prayer uttered in front of a divine presence.

Faith is something that keeps us going, struggling in the midst of controversies, contradictions, betrayals, and persecutions.

Faith also reminds us that we are just servants of the Lord. We are not more or less than that.

Faith makes us realize that we are just instruments of God, not his masters.

The First Reading, from Habakkuk, points to the importance of faith.

Faith, exercised in being just and fair, makes us survive in times of impending catastrophes, crises and the like.

The message of Habakkuk impels us to be just and faithful to God. It rejects being rash, self-sufficient and autonomous from God.

The Second Reading from 2 Timothy encourages us to make use of our giftedness. Our giftedness is

made alive and effective through faith in action.

We are gifted with the Holy Spirit, spirit of power, love and self-control, in our mission.

In faith, we take courage to embrace opposition and rejection.

If we want to serve the Church, we must have faith.

You cannot be a servant in the Church without faith.

If you feel you are just going through the motions in the liturgy, there is no meaning in what you do, then you do not have faith.

Faith makes us appreciate mysteries.

Faith is a gift from God. It is something to thank God for.

Faith makes us act justly and morally.

Faith is our connection to God. We recognize that someone out there can empower us.

A servant who is faithless cannot serve the Church. It is a contradiction in terms.

The eucharist is a sacrament of faith.

The eucharist enhances, nurtures our faith in God.

When we receive the eucharist, we are telling the Lord that we have faith in him.

We want him to control our lives. We want him to energize us, enliven us in our service to humankind and in facing our daily troubles.

The eucharist is our thanksgiving to God for being his servants.

Jesus welcomes us in the eucharist though we are his useless servants. He is waiting for us.

**-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM**

## III. OUR CONTEXT

1. Having celebrated the Week of the Laity (Sept 23-29), what lessons about Lay Participation in the Church have you learned?

2. What does faithful mean? Why are the laity also called the Faithful.

3. Do you know of civic leaders who are worth emulating? **(HM)**