

Homily for the 27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

October 5-6, 2019

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

Preacher: Sr. Joan Sobala

There has never been a time since I first came across the prophet Habakkuk that I have not been moved by the passages we are given in today's liturgy:

*How long, O Lord?
I cry for help, but you do not listen!
I cry out to you "Violence!"
But you do not intervene.*

Seekers after truth and justice in every age of human life, from the beginning of time have uttered that cry—dwellers in the cities of Europe overrun by the Mongols, the Jewish people remembering the Holocaust, the Japanese who bear the scars of Hiroshima and Nagasaki. And more recently, Hurricane Dorian in the Bahamas and the events of 09/11 make people cry out:

How long, O Lord?

Suffering, and in the midst of suffering, a cry for God's help, are things you and I share with people everywhere. At the same time we suffer, there is a yearning in us collectively and as individuals for another day, another time when we will be color blind, and life will be too precious to be destroyed, when women will not be demeaned, used or considered inferior and men will not feel pressured to live out destructive standards or die maintaining expected images—a time when everyone will be welcome in new places.

These human realities that we yearn for seem impossible. Left to ourselves, we might well despair and smother the yearnings in us before our hopes get too high. We fear the apparently impossible.

But listen to God answering Habakkuk and answering us as well:

*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.*

The vision we are called to live by is the vision of Jesus. You and I have heard it articulated many times and in many ways:

*Love without clutching.
Live without contention.
Serve without competition.*

These are not idle dreams. They are yearnings in us—the tremulous rumblings in us that come from God and turn us toward God.

We find it hard to believe that the vision is indeed possible or that it is indeed coming, as God says to Habakkuk, or if the truth be known, that we have what it takes to live by the vision.

But God knows us. God has not given us a cowardly spirit, Paul reminds Timothy and us today. God has instead given us a spirit that makes us strong, loving and wise. Gifted with this spirit and a faith that leads us to do things that are at first inexplicable, we look to the source of the encouragement we feel, and we know the source: Jesus, the Holy One, whose yearning for us comes before we even think of it.

On the surface, we may judge that we live our lives on a treadmill, doing the same thing day after day, or perhaps, as a society or world, we are falling back into barbaric ways and losing sight of life's deepest meaning and values.

We are tempted to conclude that we are people engulfed in life without victory or hope.

In one sense, there are no answers to some of the questions we ask of life or ask of God. In another sense, there is an answer. The answer is within us—an undeniable yearning for life, goodness, harmony, justice, peace. And yes, a yearning for union with God that is as complete as it can be.

This yearning is not born of naïve optimism but of bedrock confidence in our God who says with absolute clarity

*Wait for the vision.
It will surely come.*

So today and in the days ahead, let's conspire with the vision.