

Gratitude Foundation



***“Were not ten cleansed? Where are the other nine?
Has only this foreigner returned to give thanks to God?”***

(Lk. 17:15-17)

The Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

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“In all things give thanks, it is God’s will for you in Christ Jesus”

(1 Thess: 5:18)

Twenty-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reading 1

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

How long, O LORD? I cry for help
but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not intervene.
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.
Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets,
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.
The rash one has no integrity;
but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.
Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD;
let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation.
Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving;
let us joyfully sing psalms to him.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Come, let us bow down in worship;
let us kneel before the LORD who made us.
For he is our God,
and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,
Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."
R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Reading 2

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Beloved:
I remind you, to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.
For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control.
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.

Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me,
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.
Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit
that dwells within us.

Alleluia

1 Peter 1:25

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
The word of the Lord remains forever.
This is the word that has been proclaimed to you.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel

Luke 17:5-10

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

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.

"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'?

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'?

Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?

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.'"

Exegesis

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4

The *Book of Habakkuk* consists of just three chapters. The author introduces himself in the first verse. “The oracle which Habakkuk the prophet received in a vision.” (Ha 1: 1). The prophet is writing at a time of great political upheaval and turmoil. The Prophet Habakkuk mentions the Chaldeans by name in chapter 1, verse six. The Chaldeans were a people of Southern Mesopotamia who claimed Babylon as their headquarters. They had been rising in number and in power and were overtaking the Assyrians as masters of the Near East. The Chaldeans destroyed the Assyrian capital at Nineveh in the year 612 B.C. In 605 they destroyed the Egyptians at Carchemish and assumed their control of the Near East.

The conquest of Israel began in 597 when the first wave of people were carried off to Babylon. The siege of the city of Jerusalem began in January of 588. It was briefly interrupted by the Egyptians attempting a comeback and moving on Babylon. After they were crushed, Jerusalem fell in the fall of 587. The Prophet Habakkuk penned his vision during this time span. He was indeed experiencing violence all around him.

Habakkuk was a contemporary of the Prophet Jeremiah who began his public ministry in the thirteenth year of King Josiah, which was 628. It was a great time of reform under Josiah and Jeremiah was very supportive of him. King Josiah died in 609 and Israel quickly turned back to its idolatrous ways. For the next 22 years, amidst incredible political unrest, Jeremiah would plea for a return to faithfulness to Yahweh. When Jerusalem was destroyed by the Babylonians in 587 Jeremiah remained in the ruins of Jerusalem until forced into Egypt in exile.

In his writing the Prophet Habakkuk reveals his inner dialog with Yahweh. Our pericope begins with the prophet’s plea and concludes with the Lord’s response. The prophet turns toward God looking for answers, trying to understand why God is allowing His chosen people to endure so much devastation from foreign nations. The prophet cries out to God in the same manner as the psalmist: “How long, O Lord? Will You utterly forget me? How long will You hide Your face from me?” (Ps 13: 1).

I cry out to you, "Violence!" but you do not intervene. The Hebrew word that is translated in this verse and the following verse as *violence* is *hamas*. The word *hamas* appears first in sacred scripture in the *Book of Genesis*. It appears during the warning of the flood. “In the eyes of God, the earth was corrupt and full of (*hamas*) violence/lawlessness.” (Gen 6: 11).

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. It is not clear exactly which *vision* God is referring to here. It could be the eventual fall of the Babylonians and the restoration of Israel in 537. St. Jerome taught that the fulfillment of this vision is Christ. The Prophet Isaiah speaks of patience for the Lord. “For I will wait for the Lord, who is hiding His face from the house of Jacob; yes, I will wait for Him.” (Is 8: 17).

The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live. The ESV offers a more literal translation of this verse: *Behold, his soul (nepes) is puffed up; it is not upright within him, but the righteous shall live by his faith.* The Hebrew word translated as *faith* in this verse is *emunah*. Similar to the Hebrew word *emeth*, which is also translated as *faith* and at times *truth*, *emunah* connotes a sense of steadfastness, fidelity, firmness, truthfulness or trustworthiness. It is often used in the OT describing fidelity to the Covenant. It also was used to describe one’s personal relationship with Yahweh. The personal relationship with God moves to the level of an indwelling presence through Christ and the Paschal Mystery. St. Paul quotes from this passage from Habakkuk several times in his writings. “For in it is revealed the righteousness of God from faith to faith; as it is written, ‘the one who is righteous by faith will live.’” (Rom 1: 17). “And that no one is justified before God by the law is clear, for ‘the one who is righteous by faith will live.’” (Gal 3: 11). As this quotation is translated from Hebrew to Greek the OT word for *faith*, *emunah*, is translated *pistis*. See the following exegesis of 2 Timothy for a discussion on the word *pistis*.

Exegesis (Continued)

Psalm 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9

Psalm 95 consists of eleven verses. It is titled *A Call to Praise and Obedience* in the NAB and *Let Us Sing Songs of Praise* in the ESV. Psalm 95 is believed to be an enthronement song, a liturgical song sung while the people entered Yahweh's presence raising their voices in praise and thanksgiving. It proclaims Yahweh as a saving God, e.g. the Rock of our Salvation. Throughout Sacred Scripture God is portrayed as Rock. It speaks of the immutability of God. God is our anchor point in a passing world. God is the Rock that we can rest upon in the turbulent oceans of this world, the Rock is an instrument of salvation. The image of God as creator and God as savior are woven throughout the verses of this psalm.

In His role as Savior, God fulfills His promise to shepherd His people. As His beloved sheep that He pastures we must come to know the voice of the Shepherd. That begins with listening with our hearts.

Come, let us sing joyfully to the LORD; let us acclaim the Rock of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him. The Hebrew word translated as *LORD* in this verse and throughout the psalm is Yahweh. The word that is translated as *Rock* is *Sur*. *Sur* appears over one hundred times in the OT in reference to God, twenty-five times in the Psalms. The Hebrew word for *salvation* is *yesha*. The Hebrew word for *thanksgiving* in this verse is *todah*. *Todah* describes a outward expression of gratitude as in a song, especially a communal song, or a sacrificial offering of thanksgiving. It connotes a public display of gratitude.

Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides. In the *Song of Moses* in the *Book of Deuteronomy*, Moses exalts our creator and savior God numerous times, e.g., "They spurned the God who made them and scorned their saving Rock." (Deut 32: 15). The image of God as shepherd entered into sacred scripture through the Prophets Ezekiel and Jeremiah. It began with the promise of God, "For thus says the Lord God: I Myself will look after and tend My sheep." (Ez 34: 11). This promise comes as the sheep were scattered throughout the Near East during the Exile.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice: "Harden not your hearts as at Meribah, as in the day of Massah in the desert, Where your fathers tempted me; they tested me though they had seen my works." The psalmist is calling us to learn from the mistakes of our fathers during their sojourn to the Promised Land. "Of all the men who have seen My glory and the signs I worked in Egypt and in the desert, and who nevertheless have put Me to the test ten times already and have failed to heed My voice, not one shall see the land which I have promised on the oath of their fathers." (Num 14: 22-23). "The place was called Massah and Meribah, because the Israelites quarreled there and tested the Lord, saying, 'Is the Lord in our midst or not?'" (Ex 17: 7). "You shall not put the Lord, your God, to the test, as you did at Massah." (Deut 6: 16).

St. Paul would later encourage us as to learn well from our father's mistakes. "Let us not test Christ as some of them did and suffered death by the serpents." (1 Cor 10: 9).

The final verses of Psalm 95 offer us the ultimate warning against hardness of heart. "Forty years I loathed that generation; I said: 'This people's heart goes astray, they do not know My ways.'" Therefore I swore in My anger: 'They shall never enter My rest.'" The *Letter to the Hebrews* also quotes this verse in warning. "As I swore in My wrath, 'They shall not enter into My rest.'" (Heb 3: 11). (See also Heb 4:3, 5).

Exegesis (Continued)

2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Our pericope today is taken from a larger section of 2 Timothy that is titled *Exhortations to Timothy* in the NAB. Our passage is further titled *The Gifts Timothy Has Received*.

In his address to Timothy, Paul recalls the faith that Timothy inherited from his mother and grandmother. “I yearn to see you again, recalling your tears, so that I may be filled with joy, as I recall your sincere faith that first lived in your grandmother Lois and in your mother Eunice and that I am confident lives also in you.” (2 Tim 1: 4-5). St. Paul speaks of faith as a reality living within Timothy that also lives in his mother and grandmother. In articulating this indwelling reality St. Paul seems to interchange words like *faith (pistis)*, *gift (charisma)* and *Holy Spirit*.

St. Paul describes a gift that was passed on to him from his mother and grandmother, but also a gift that he and the presbyterate conferred on him through the imposition of hands. “Do not neglect the gift you have, which was conferred on you through the prophetic word with the imposition of hands of the presbyterate.” (1 Tim 4: 14). Some exegetes have further articulated the charism of ordination conferred on him from the presbyterate.

I remind you, to stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands. This gift is something that has been conferred on Timothy and now lives within him. It is first and foremost the gift of the Holy Spirit, which Paul later reminds him is living within him. With that gift of the Holy Spirit comes the illumination of divine life and love that fills and guides the heart, soul and mind. Through the imposition of the hands of Timothy and the presbyterate the Holy Spirit empowers the charisms of ordination. This is the gift that Paul urges Timothy to stir into flame. God’s grace needs our response and our cooperation. We must accept and ignite into motion the indwelling gift.

St. Paul begins this discussion by rejoicing in the sincere faith of Timothy. The Greek word that is translated as faith is *pistis*. The word carries with it our common understanding of the word *faith*. It means a system of beliefs that we hold and profess. It means trust and confidence. It means loyalty, fidelity and assurance. As it is portrayed throughout Sacred Scripture it takes on an even deeper meaning. It connotes a deep, abiding, personal relationship of love, even a sharing of life, and indwelling of divine life. This deep abiding relationship is made possible by the justification that comes from the dying and rising of Jesus. By the Paschal Mystery we are set free to enter this communion of love with the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit. Jesus prayed, “I pray not only for them, but also for those who will believe in Me through their word so that they may all be one, as You, Father, are in Me and I in You, that they may also be in Us.” (Jn 17: 20-21).

Our pericope from St. Paul concludes with this image of indwelling divine life. *Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.*

Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit that dwells within us. St. Paul talks often of the indwelling presence of Christ within him. With the indwelling presence of Christ comes the Father and the Holy Spirit, as they are One. Within the Trinity of God lives the fire of love, the light of faith, and the gift of hope. These are the gifts that we are called to stir into flame!

Exegesis (Continued)

Luke 17:5-10

As in the past several weeks the setting of our Gospel passage this weekend is that of Jesus on the journey to Jerusalem with His disciples. On the way He is teaching and healing. Jesus is at times addressing the crowd and at times addressing His disciples. Our pericope today is addressed to His disciples and then Jesus' response to their request to increase their faith.

Jesus challenges them again with the difficult requirements of discipleship. They continue to learn the onerous demands to follow Jesus on the way. Jesus instructs them to resist the temptations of sin. "Things that cause sin will inevitably occur, but woe to the person through whom they occur. It would be better if a millstone were put around his neck and be thrown into the sea than for him to cause one of these little ones to sin." (Lk 17: 1-2). Then Jesus reminds His disciples of their need to forgive. "And if he (your brother) wrongs you seven times in one day and returns seven times saying, 'I am sorry,' you should forgive him." (Lk 17: 4).

The response of these demands seems to be a cry for help by His disciples: "And the apostles said to the Lord, 'Increase our faith.'" (Lk 17: 5). The remainder of our gospel passage consists of the words of Jesus, seemingly in response to this request of His apostles. This is the only time during the journey of Jesus to Jerusalem that the twelve are referred to by Luke as Apostles. The request of the Apostles for an increase in faith is unique to Luke's Gospel.

The Greek word translated as *faith* in this verse is *pistis*. For a discussion of the evolution of the word see exegesis above on 2 Timothy.

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." The word *if* would seem to imply that Jesus recognizes that they do not have faith of that magnitude. Given the context the apostles are not asking for a deeper theological understanding or a deeper conviction, they seem to be asking for strength, and courage for the task at hand. They are looking for the confidence in God that would allow them to work miracles. This parallel saying of Jesus in Matthew's Gospel comes in response to the apostles' failure to drive out the demon from the boy. (See Mt 17: 19-20). The comparable saying of Jesus in Mark's Gospel is in response to the withered fig-tree. (Mk 11: 22-23). In Mark's Gospel Jesus gives the apostles a more direct response to this question of faith: "Have faith in God. Amen, I say to you, whoever says to this mountain, 'Be lifted up and thrown into the sea,' and does not doubt that it will happen, it shall be done for him. Therefore, I tell you, all that you ask for in prayer, believe that you will receive it and it shall be yours." (Mk 11: 23-24). Jesus is teaching the apostles to place their complete trust in God, to be assured that with God all things are possible, even those that thwart the laws of nature and physics. A mulberry tree is a very large tree with an enormous root system that is not easily uprooted! A mountain is not easily lifted up!

The story of the servant that follows is unique to Luke's Gospel and appears to be a continued response to the apostle's request of Jesus for an increase in faith. The story of the servant reveals the fact that the merit of the servant does not come from his service or even his faithfulness, it comes from God. Grace is pure gift. There is no need to earn God's grace. Worth does not come from within, it comes from God. Our service must be a response to God's love and grace. This too requires a leap of faith.

Reflection

In our Gospel reading this weekend the disciples ask Jesus to increase their faith. I have to admit that for most of my life I have looked at faith as a personal response to God. I did not look toward God as being in anyway the source of faith. Yet, faith is one of the theological virtues, i.e. faith, hope, and love. As such the Church teaches that God is the source of faith. It has occurred to me that faith is both gift and response.

St. Augustine talked about the light of faith that is a gift from God. He termed this gift of light “Divine Illumination.” He taught that if we open our hearts to receive the Holy Spirit, then that indwelling of God’s Spirit will enlighten our minds and hearts to see with eyes of faith. It involves connectivity with God that allows us to see spiritual reality with spiritual eyes. This allows us to experience life in the Spirit and to live the fullness of life that God desires for us. Living in this sea of love allows us to fulfill the purpose of our lives and to find meaning in all things, by finding God in all things and in all situations.

Even in this state of being God respects our freedom at all times. We are truly free to accept or reject God’s gifts of faith, hope, and love. In this sense faith is a response to God, a response to grace. This outward response to God is how we most often think of faith. It involves the system of beliefs that we hold and the creed that we recite. It is outwardly expressed in our words and actions. But ultimately it must become a way of life, a framework for living.

Personally, I cannot fathom a life without faith. Faith is the lens through which I see the world. Like the apostles I too ask the Lord to increase my faith every day, to help me to live as God wants me to live, to help me to be the pastor that He wants me to be, and to help me to find meaning and purpose in all things.

As pastor I have experienced amazing awakenings of faith in my five plus years with you. I also see remarkable growth in those who are actively engaged in parish life here. My prayer for the parish is that the Lord continues to increase our faith as we grow together as His Body. So, come Holy Spirit fill the hearts of us your faithful and enkindle in us the fire of your love. Amen.

In Jesus and Mother Mary,

A handwritten signature in cursive script, appearing to read "Fr. Glenn".

Personal Witness

In my mid-thirties I knew without a doubt that Jesus was calling me to the priesthood. I have described it many times as a discovery of my true self. My calling was more of a revelation to me. The words that I heard in my heart were, “You are a priest.” From that moment of enlightenment until I first entered the seminary at the University of St. Mary of the Lake in Mundelein Illinois seven years passed.

I was a Certified Public Accountant and a partner in a regional firm that I had helped to build as one of the original owners. I had invested a good part of my life in this practice, fifteen years and thousands of hours. As the world would judge, I was successful. I had achieved the goal that I had set out to attain after college. I was deeply entrenched in the practice with numerous close working relationships with colleagues and clients. These were relationships built on years of mutual respect and trust. I did not want to break or even know how to break those ties.

At first, I tried to ignore the calling, ignore God. That wasn’t working. My head was in one place, and my heart was in another. It proved to be the most difficult time of my life. In the depth of my soul, I had this incredible longing to serve the Lord. His enduring love for me was overwhelming. Day by day my love for the Lord grew deeper and deeper. It was the power of love that gently moved me into action.

In His great love God gave me the faith to endure the days that followed. I began the process of discerning the various paths to priesthood and I jumped through the many hoops along the way. Without a clear path before me I began to communicate my intentions and explore different options to divest my practice, business holdings, and real estate including my home of 15 years. The losses were painful as I continued to let go of things one at a time. The most difficult loss was leaving my home and selling, giving away and storing possessions. I had a recurring dream that I was a wandering homeless person and when I awoke, I realized that I was.

I was leaving everything behind without a clear path before me. It was a giant leap of faith. Even as the path to seminary and priesthood started to materialize, my future was still clouded with uncertainty. Seminary life was a journey of constant evaluation and scrutiny. From the first day we were reminded that many do not complete the program. Numerous conversations with faculty were predicated with the caveat “if you make it to ordination.” The future seemed so uncertain.

Day by day the journey led me deeper in faith. As the weeks passed, I resorted to total surrender to the Lord. I was finally able to let go and place my life in God’s hands. Like the poor widow I put all that I had, my life, into God’s hands. It was the most freeing moment of my life. Lord, help me to return to that faith. Help me to stir into flame that spark of faith once again.

