

Sunday, October 6, 2019

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Meditation and Questions for Reflection or Group Discussion

Mass Readings:

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

2nd Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

Responsorial: Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9

Gospel: Luke 17:5-10

Waiting in Faith for the Lord to Act

If it delays, wait for it. (Habakkuk 2:3)

Nobody likes to wait. Whether we are waiting for a traffic light to turn green or awaiting the birth of a child, time seems to drag. Even if we tell ourselves that our wait will soon be over, we still feel eager for everything to hurry up.

This must be how the prophet Habakkuk felt as he looked out at his beloved city, Jerusalem. The Babylonian army had defeated Egypt, and the people knew they were next on the list. Added to the threat of war was the moral and religious state of the city. Weak kings continued to make and break alliances with pagan nations, worship of false gods was on the rise, and the rich and powerful continued to exploit the poor and weak. “How long, O Lord?” Habakkuk pleaded. He felt surrounded by “destruction and violence . . . ; strife, and clamorous discord” (1:2, 3). And God seemed to be nowhere in sight.

You know how that feels, don’t you? A child has turned away from the Church, and you long to see her find her way home. A friend is not returning your calls, and you wonder what you did wrong. Violence against the weak, the unborn, and the foreigner is increasing, and you don’t know if God will ever put an end to it. Sometimes it just hurts to have to wait for a resolution.

If this describes you, then know that God has a word for you—the same word he gave to Habakkuk: “The vision still has its time” (2:3). God’s vision, his plan, is still unfolding. He is not standing by helplessly, watching you struggle. Try your best to hold on; put your faith in his love and his mercy. Even if it seems to be taking forever, don’t give up. God still loves you. He will always love you.

God promised Habakkuk that those who hold onto their faith in him “shall live” (Habakkuk 2:4). That includes you.

“Lord Jesus, I believe in your love and mercy. Come and teach me how to wait in faith!”

(Many thanks to *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org) for allowing us to use meditations from their monthly devotional magazine. Used with permission.)

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Questions for Reflection or Discussion:

1. The first reading opens with these words: *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. It continues with these words: 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.*
 - How would you describe the reasons for the heartfelt cry of the prophet, Habakkuk?
 - We too know how easy it is to have faith in God when things are going well, and how easy it is to struggle with our faith when they are not. How would you describe those times in your life?
 - How would you describe the message the Lord's is trying to convey with his response?
 - How do the Lord's words apply to you?
2. The responsorial psalm begins with these words of joy and praise from the psalmist: *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. Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the LORD who made us. It ends with these words: 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."*
 - In what ways does this psalm, like the first reading, offer contrasting ways to respond to the work of the Lord?
 - What steps can you take individually, or with other Christians, to allow your own response to the Lord to be more like the beginning words of the psalm and less like the ending words?
3. The second reading opens as follows: *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. It continues with these words: So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord, ... 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.*
 - What do the opening words mean to you? How do you *stir into flame* the gifts of God in you and in others?
 - What do the words that follow mean to you? How do they apply to how you live out your faith each day?
4. The Gospel reading begins with these words: *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."* The Lord then goes on to describe the servant who *did what was commanded?* The reading ends with these words of the Lord: *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 apostles ask Jesus to *Increase our faith*. We know that faith is a gift of God, yet we also know that each of us has a part to play in responding to this gift. How would you describe the part each of us plays?
 - What are some specific steps you can take to allow the Lord to "Increase your faith"?
 - What do you think it means to be *unprofitable servants*? How do you see yourself as an *unprofitable servant*?
5. The meditation is a reflection on the first reading and these words from the reading: *If it delays, wait for it.* (Habakkuk 2:3). It ends with these words: "Sometimes it just hurts to have to wait for a resolution. If this describes you, then know that God has a word for you—the same word he gave to Habakkuk: 'The vision still has its time' (2:3). God's vision, his plan, is still unfolding. He is not standing by helplessly, watching you struggle. Try your best to hold on; put your faith in his love and his mercy. Even if it seems to be taking forever, don't give up. God still loves you. He will always love you. God promised Habakkuk that those who hold onto their faith in him 'shall live' (Habakkuk 2:4). That includes you."
 - What do these words from the meditation mean to you? "Sometimes it just hurts to have to wait for a resolution."
 - If this describes you at the present time, do you believe that the word God gave to Habakkuk is for you as well: "The vision still has its time"?
 - The final words of the meditation are: "God promised Habakkuk that those who hold onto their faith in him 'shall live' (Habakkuk 2:4). That includes you." The full verse of Habakkuk 2:4 is "The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live." How do these words "include you"?

Take some time now to pray and ask the Lord for the grace to trust in his love and mercy and to understand what it means to wait in faith. Use the prayer below from the end of the meditation as a starting point.

"Lord Jesus, I believe in your love and mercy. Come and teach me how to wait in faith!"

[The discussion questions were created by Maurice Blumberg, who is currently a member of the board of directors of the ChristLife Catholic Ministry for Evangelization (www.christlife.org), a member of the National Service Committee Council of the Catholic Charismatic Renewal (www.nsc-chariscenter.org), and a board member of The Love of Christ Foundation. Prior to this, Maurice was the founding executive director of the National fellowship of Catholic Men, a chairman of the board of *The Word Among Us* (www.wau.org), and a director of partner relations for The Word Among Us Partners ministry.]