

## TWENTY SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

All the three readings of this Sunday speak a lot about “*Faith*” and how it works in our lives. St. Thomas Aquinas says, “*To one who has Faith, no explanation is necessary. To one without Faith, no explanation is possible.*” So, on this 27th Sunday of ordinary time, the holy mother church invites us to reflect on this most important Christian and theological virtues – Faith. It is the foundation of our Christian life. Faith gives us a new vision and version of life. Without faith, we see only the ugly and dark side of life. Without faith, we remain helpless and slaves to despair and hopelessness. Faith liberates us and helps us to see the power and love of God at work in our lives.

Hence, in the first reading of this Sunday, the church reminds us of this famous verse from the book of Habakkuk, “*The just shall live by his faithfulness.*” The prophet Habakkuk cried out to God even though his faith was eroding. What Habakkuk saw around him was despair and distress. There was oppression and injustice, there was outrage and violence, and God does not seem to be doing anything about it. But Habakkuk’s faith was restored when God answered and even told him to write down the vision. What restored Habakkuk’s faith is that God promised and is ready to fulfil his promise, and he does not deceive. It may come slowly; but come it will without fail.

As human beings, at times in life, we find ourselves in the shoes of the prophet Habakkuk. We find ourselves helpless, and everything goes dark, and hope appears hopeless to us. It is part of the process of Christian growth and maturity. The good news is that God will not fail us if we remain faithful during such moments. He will break his silence at his appropriate time to reassure us that he is there for us. Through these words, “*The just shall live by his faithfulness*”, God encourages us to remain faithful in good deeds and actions. This faith in question is saving faith. The Just here is the one who still perseveres in good deeds. He is the one who still trusts in the saving power of God. He is the one who still prays to God in spite of the circumstance.

In the second reading, Paul strikes the same note by advising us thus: ***“Fan into flame the gift that God gave you. Keep as your pattern the sound teaching you have heard from us, in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.”*** Here, the Apostle calls us to action. He awakens us to realize who we are. He reminds us of the power of God at work in us through the sound teachings we have received. He encourages us to preserve the faith (the sound doctrine) we have received from God through the Holy Spirit and His apostles. Hence, this simply reminds us that our journey is a journey of faith.

This faith must be constantly questioned and also called into action. We must live this faith through our steadfastness and perseverance. This faith must be demonstrated through actions because according to James 2:26: ***“Faith without action is dead”***. So, the type of faith we are talking about here is not the type that is blind and always asleep. No, it is the faith that sees good opportunities and takes advantage of them. It is not like the faith that most of us preach today that suggests that we should go to sleep every second and expect God to assume our responsibilities and solve all our problems. On the contrary, it is faith that moves us into action.

In today’s gospel, the Apostles of Christ reminds us of what we should be praying for each day. That is, praying to Christ: ***“Lord, increase our faith.”*** Their humility and acceptance of their lack equally remind us of the importance of faith in our Christian life and journey.

Each time I read this passage; I remember this short story. A rusty shield once said to the sun, ***“dazzle me,”*** and the sun responded: ***“Polish yourself, and I will dazzle you.”*** Our Lord Jesus Christ is always ready to increase our faith. However, we must humbly ask for it. Second, we must make the necessary efforts through our actions. So, we need to grow in Faith by using the means Christ has given us in His Church. We have to cultivate our Faith through prayer, Bible study, and leading a well-disciplined spiritual life. Faith is the gift of God - so we must pray that God will increase our Faith. Time spent with God in prayer is fundamental to the development of Faith. We must pray for a Faith that is strong enough to overcome the difficulties and

crises we face daily. In addition, association with people of Faith can build our Faith.

We need also to thank God, giving Him the credit for our well-being. Following the example of the Apostles, we must pray for greater Faith and trust in God. Let us not only remember God when a storm arises in our life. Or pray to Him only when trouble strikes. Most of us are inclined to forget God's providence when our earthly affairs are going well. How often do we thank Him when we enjoy good health, or when our home-life and business are going smoothly? How many of us thank God for all the gifts we have received? Most of us often attribute our good health to correct use of food and exercise. Often, we attribute our success to our hard work and intelligence - *That is not faith.*

My dear brothers and sisters, we grow in Faith as we act in Faith. Every gift of God is strengthened by the exercise of it. So, we need to persevere in good works and remain steadfast during difficult moments in life. We need more faith to trust in God's will and judgment. So, we must humble ourselves each day to say: "*Lord, increase our faith.*" Amen.

*Shalom!!!*

*Fr. Isidore*