

## Commentary on the Gospel for Sun, Oct 6th 2013

Faith, like patience, is a hard grace to ask of God. We are oriented to know all things, especially about the future. We are impatient to grasp reasons for why events occur.

We are invited to pray for an increase of faith which implies also that we surrender a little bit of our demanding minds and accompanying fears. We are not invited to give up asking questions, but rather to pray with, rather than praying always for those puzzling events.

We pray with the struggles of being women and men of faith. We are servants of a God who seems to delay in presenting clarity and security. We pray with our desire that God would be a little more efficient.

### REFLECTION

Habakkuk is being prepared by God for a vision, but before that vision he makes a personal and communal complaint. This we hear in the First Reading of the liturgy. The Prophet sees nothing good around him. The nation Israel is being invaded and there is terror, discord, violence everywhere.

The first part of our reading sounds similar to how we might feel after watching or listening to the evening news. There seems to be nothing good. I have noticed though, that after almost the whole half an hour of the news program's being full of violence, terror, discord, the programs usually end with a "feel-good" story so that we can go to dinner or bed with something hopeful at least.

Well, we hear the ending half of today's First Reading as a similar "feel-good" statement. The Lord responds by asking the Prophet to write a vision down, because it might take awhile to be fulfilled and God doesn't want the vision to be forgotten. The "just one" will live, because of faithful waiting, but the "rash" will demand God's intervention immediately. It may seem that violence and terror succeed, faith and patience will endure. God has made promises, which at times, seem far away from fulfillment. Faith is more than belief; it is a way of responding to our lives' events.

Jesus has been patiently leading his apostles along the narrow path of discipleship. Lately we have

been listening to his teachings on freedom from the attachments to wealth and power. In the verses immediately preceding our Gospel today, Jesus has given them some encouragement to watch and act carefully in regards to leading anyone astray. He also is telling his followers about forgiving even their brothers seven times a day if they can express sorrow. As with most of Jesus' teachings, the apostles, and ourselves, find difficulties in obeying. They see that to do so would take more faith than they seem to have.

This is the context then for our Gospel reading. The apostles ask for an increase in faith. Jesus seems to be harsh in his response. The apostles are pictured as having no faith, not even the size of a mustard seed. Then Jesus seems even more harsh by telling them about a servant who does what he is told to do and expects no special treatment from the master when the duties are finished. The master is not grateful for the servant's having done their labors, including fixing the master's dinner after finishing the farm labors.

When I was a lad, more than a few years ago, I had "chores" around our house. We all did, but my being the oldest boy; it seemed I got all the hard ones. I mowed the "huge" yard, washed the car, dug the garden, weeded it, and did the storm windows and screens as well as a thousand other household things. In the winter I shoveled the snow from our "long" driveway and "long" sidewalks. I never was thanked, not even once, as I now recall. Now, as then, my only reward is, as it was then, knowing that I was at least doing more than my younger brother Mike. I also was aware that though my father never said "thank you" at least he was not displeased or critical. I was doing what was expected, what I was told. It was all part of being in our family.

Even in the area of faith, as human beings, we want "affection", that is getting the job done well, and "affection" a little praise or thanks. Our basic human and Christian struggle seems to be about present-time versus eternal-then. We are all in the family of God and we listen to what is "commanded". Fr. Alexander of our staff is fond of saying, "Jesus is grateful." Though that can bring a smile to my face, I do wish Jesus would congratulate, praise, or thank me in person, especially when I feel like Habakkuk. We are all believers in the promises, the "eternal then" and we wait and keep washing windows, mowing lawns, plowing and tending the flocks in our care. Our faithfulness to our doing such things is our service for our Master and our pledge of trust in the life to come.

I am sure that God is grateful, but if God were to send me a thank-you card each time I did something good, I think I would end up serving my human and healthy need for affirmation. I think it is mostly just a joy to be a believer in the eternal love of God. I loved my family and I did my chores not to win more love, but to extend the love and life within that family. My father, like God, was doing what a father does. God, like my father, encourages us to stay faithful to who we are.

“The Lord is good to those who hope in Him, to the soul that seeks Him.”

Larry Gillick, S.J.