

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time

Homily by Deacon Jim Olshefski

October 5, 2025

Patience is a virtue, one that is sadly lacking in the world today. I myself occasionally lose my patience, if I ever had it in the first place, during routine daily life: while waiting in line at the grocery store and while waiting in traffic in the seemingly endless construction zones throughout our metropolitan area. Habakkuk, in today's first reading, also seemed to have lost his patience when he cries out to the Lord about the violence and ruin that surround him; violence that is still with us today: Witness the attack on children at the Catholic school in Minnesota, the assault on the LDS meeting house in Michigan and the terrorist attack at the synagogue in Manchester, England, to name but a few. So, asks Habakkuk, what is God going to do about the violence? Why do bad things happen to good people?

The Lord's response is wait and trust; have patience and faith, for the story of our salvation will unfold in accordance with God's plan, even though we may not understand. God assures the prophet that faith gives us access to Divine power, and, hence, the just will live righteous lives in the midst of encircling evil because of their faith. To paraphrase St. Augustine, "God would not allow evil into any of his works unless his wisdom and power were such that he could bring an even greater good out of that evil." The premier example of that is the greatest evil ever committed, the deliberate, torture, and murder of God himself on the cross, which brought about the greatest good ever to occur: the salvation of the human race through Jesus' resurrection. Therefore, as we heard at the end of the first reading: "The just one, because of his faith, shall live." So, have patience and faith, God really does know what he's doing.

But how much faith is expected of us? The first clue in today's readings comes from the Responsorial Psalm. In the desert during the Exodus, the Israelites had repeatedly shown a total lack of patience and faith in God. In response, the Lord proclaims through the psalmist:

"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."

At this point, the bar appears pretty low regarding God's expectations of our faith.

Then we turn to today's gospel when Jesus responds to the Apostles' plea to "Increase our faith" with assurance that quantity of faith is not as important as simply having faith in Jesus, the Son of God. He reassures them that faith as small as a mustard seed can achieve great things through God's power; even in small quantities, faith allows God to work miracles in our lives and in the lives of others.

Jesus is making the point that the Kingdom of God on earth may start small but will eventually grow to become great, if we have patience and faith. Then, God's plan that we become saints in heaven will come to fruition.

One more comment on how the exercise of patience can help us on our pilgrimage toward salvation. We can also be a catalyst for patience in others:

I just returned from my annual retreat at the Jesuit retreat center in St. Louis, the White House. While there I came across a quote from one of the former Jesuit directors of the White House, who is now a resident of the Jesuit retirement community in St. Louis. Commenting on the wonderful staff at the retirement community, Father Jim Burshek quipped "We, Jesuit residents, have but one job here, and that's helping [the staff] become saints by trying their patience!"

We, too, can also become saints if we have patience and faith!