

Twenty-Seven Sunday in Ordinary Time (C).

Do not Despair

To **despair** means to lose all sense of hope — to feel as though there is no way forward, no chance for improvement, no possibility of rescue or renewal. It's more than just sadness or disappointment. Despair is the **conviction** that nothing can change, that things are hopeless and lead us to giving up, because if there is no hope, why continue? At times we might feel sad, depressed and might even feel despair in the human sense. We encounter situations in our lives that make us ask **why is God allowing this?** That makes us wonder **where is God?** Moments that can shake our faith, yet our Lord tells us don't despair... but **how can I prevent feeling despair?**

Our first reading today was from the prophet Habakkuk; he was a prophet in the 7th century BC. His entire book seems to be a conversation between him and God, where he is challenging God or asking God about what he was enduring. Listen to these lines... **“How long, O Lord? I cry for help, but you do not listen! I cry out to you, Violence! but you do not intervene”**. Sounds to me like a person near despair, a person who is desperate and is losing hope. **But why did Habakkuk feel this way?**

Habakkuk lived in Judah during the transition of the fall of the Assyrian empire and the rise of the Babylonian empire. Judah itself was undergoing these major upheavals:

- **Political Corruption:** Leaders twisted the law for personal gain. Justice was delayed or denied, especially to the poor and powerless.
- **Violence and Insecurity:** Internal conflict and external threats from other empires created an environment of constant fear.
- **Exploitation of the Vulnerable:** Economic oppression, heavy taxation, and abuse of power left ordinary people with little recourse.
- **National Arrogance and Conquest:** Babylon, embodied pride, greed, and military aggression, taking over nations to expand its power.

Habakkuk was experiencing all this... he was praying and asking for help, but seem to have been getting nothing... **he seemed to be near despair**... God finally responded with this statement **“the just one, because of his faith, shall live”** ... our Lord seems to be implying that somehow, **faith is an antidote to despair.**

Maybe you are feeling like Habakkuk, you feel like you are near despair, you are looking at our world and you also see a lot of upheaval, you might be seeing:

- Many nations struggle with **corruption** where laws are applied unequally.
- **Violence** continues to scar societies, from wars between nations to community unrest.

- Economic systems sometimes **favor the wealthy and powerful** while widening the gap between rich and poor.
- Global powers still pursue dominance, leading to cycles of conquest, intervention, and displacement of ordinary people.

You might be thinking of wars like Ukraine-Russia, Israel-Gaza, school shootings, church shootings, human trafficking, homelessness, poverty, discrimination, bullying, climate extremes, financial uncertainty, violence, government shutdowns and you ask... **How long, O Lord? I cry for help, but you do not listen!** And his answer for you today **is have faith...** You might say that is a cop out, it sounds like a pie in the sky, how can I have faith under these circumstances, **what is faith, what does faith look like, you might even wonder, do I even have faith?**

Faith, Hope and Love are known as the three theological virtues, they are virtues because they help us persevere towards our end goal, they are theological because they are **freely given by God** so that we can know him and have a relationship with him. **Faith** helps us believe in God and what he has revealed to us. **Hope** is the virtue that helps us trust in his promises. **Faith** is not taking a jump without reason, it is believing what has been revealed, it is building a relationship with God. It is God opening our eyes to see that he **has always been with us**. **Hope** is trusting that because he has always been there, he will continue to be there, and that I can trust his promises. **Faith** is saying, I can see where he has been with me in the past and Hope is saying because he has been with me, I know that he will be with me in the future. I believe our Lord tells us that Faith saves us because Faith is having confidence in him, trusting him, believing him.

There was a moment in the prophet Habakkuk's life where *he realized he had faith and hope* as he stated: Though the fig tree do not blossom, nor fruit be on the vines, the produce of the olive fail and the fields yield no food, the flock be cut off from the fold and there be no herd in the stalls, **yet I will rejoice in the Lord, I will joy in the God of my salvation**. In other words, even if the worse were to happen I know where my trust is. He was no longer in despair because somehow, he realized that God was in control. Faith and Hope.

As we look around our world, international concerns, national, or personal concerns we might not be in the same spiritual place that Habakkuk found himself at the end, and we might still be wondering **do I have faith... is there any hope?** If you are wondering, my answer to you is... if you are here today is **because you have faith...** and because of your faith... **we have hope!**

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