

27th SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle – C; Oct. 2nd 2022
Habakkuk 1:2-3, 2:2-4; Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14; Luke 17:5-10

Dear Sisters & Brothers,

In today's first reading we have just heard the frustration of Prophet Habakkuk who cried out to the Lord for help, but he didn't see the intervention of God at all. But God asks him, *"If it delays, wait for it, it will surely come, it will not be late. The rash one has no integrity, but the just one, because of his faith, shall live."* In the Old Testament Abraham is the role model of faith and he is known to be **the Father of faith**. For, he believed in the Promise of God, even when things seemed to be impossible. Coming to the New Testament, we know that according to Mark's gospel, the very mission statement of Jesus was, **"This is the time of fulfillment. The kingdom of God is at hand. Repent and believe in the gospel"** (Mk 1:15). In Mark alone on several occasions we come across the word 'faith' or belief, especially connected to the healing ministry of Jesus. Let us see a few incidents. First it appears in connection with the cure of the paralytic man. Mark says, **"When Jesus saw their faith, (his friends' faith) he said to the paralytic, "Child your sins are forgiven"** (Mk 2:5). Second time the use of this word is addressed to the disciples in the Lake, fighting with the storm. Jesus asks them, **"Why are you terrified? Do you not yet have faith"** (Mk 4:40). The third time Jesus uses the word faith to the woman with hemorrhages. After curing her he says, **"Daughter, your faith has saved you"** (Mk 5:34). The word 'faith' occurs fourth time in curing the blind man, Bartimaeus. After healing him Jesus says, **"Go your way; your faith has saved you"** (Mk 10:52). In all the four gospels we find Jesus testing and questioning the faith of people before he worked a miracle. Mark says that Jesus could not perform any mighty miracle in his own town due to the lack of faith in his own people. We read in Mark 6:6 **"He was amazed at their lack of faith."**

Though the disciples were the witnesses of the mighty works of Jesus, we see them losing their faith at the critical times. On the occasion of the Transfiguration of Jesus, while Jesus was on the mountain with Peter, James and John, the other disciples were at the foot of the mountain. When a man requested the disciples to heal his demoniac boy, they could not do it. So Jesus accuses his disciples for the lack of their faith in these words: **"O faithless generation, how long will I be with you"** (Mk 9:19). In the farewell discourse Jesus encourages the grief stricken disciples: **"Do not let your hearts be troubled. You have faith in God; have faith also in me"** (Jn 14:1). But they all lost their faith in Jesus at his arrest and tragic death. They hid themselves in the Upper room.

It is very clear from the request of the disciples in today's gospel: **"Lord, increase our faith"** that their faith was not deep enough to face the challenges of the discipleship.

But the statement of Jesus about the tiny faith as a mustard seed uprooting the mulberry tree, perhaps, added more confusion and frustration to the disciples. Of course, what Jesus means here is not that literally the mulberry tree will be planted in the sea; **rather if we have a little faith, the so called impossible things can be possible. In the lives of the disciples, the journey from unbelief to belief was pretty long.** In other words, the deepening of their faith happened very gradually.

None of us need to hear a lecture on the importance of the virtue of faith. We all know that the center of our Christian life is our faith in Jesus Christ. We all claim that we have faith in Jesus. We all wish that we could have a little more faith. Our very presence in the Church on every weekend is indeed the reflection of our faith in the Lord. But we need to examine our every life situation, good and bad, and see how deep our faith is. Of course, when things go well with us, it is easy to put our trust in the Lord and remain faithful and grateful to Him. But the real test of our faith comes in our adverse situations especially when we are physically, mentally and materially down. **Our test of faith begins when our calculations go wrong and dreams shatter; when we think that all the doors are shut against us.**

I have met many people who were good Christians, quitting Church and God, for the very reason that God didn't do things for them the way they wanted. In such adverse situations some even question the very existence of God. The faith that is not tested is not the real faith. Abraham was tested very severely. But he remained faithful. In our lives too, let God answer our prayers the way He wishes. We should not dictate God as how He should act. We need to trust in him always and no matter what our situation is and He seems to be silent. Indeed, faith is a gift from God; but we need to desire and pray to God for that gift. **Faith is nothing but to believe in the Lord even when I don't understand what He is asking of me.** After the World War II the prisons were emptied from German prisons; many died in the dark prison cells; others came out free, though half dead. In one of the dark prison cells somebody noticed a writing on the rough wall: **"I believe in the Sun even when it is not shining; I believe in love even when I don't experience it; I believe in God even when He is silent."** My dear friends, these words are the reflections of the strong faith of that prisoner who may have lost his life in that dark cell; perhaps even without hearing the voice of the Lord. **Yes, I believe in the Lord even when He is silent and that is the real faith.**