

Bible Study

Twentieth-seventh Sunday in Ordinary Time, cycle C

Opening Prayer: (Sign of the Cross) “Good and gracious God, we place ourselves in the awareness of your presence. Send your Holy Spirit to guide us through this time of reflection and prayer, so that we might come to know you more fully and to be more faithful disciples. We ask this through Jesus, our Lord and Savior. Amen.”

Focusing Questions

1. Share a recent time when you needed to have patient trust in God.
2. Would people say that you are a person of integrity? Explain your answer.

Commentary before the First Reading: Habakkuk 1:2-3 and 2:2-4

This week we are treated to a reading from another of the so-called “minor prophets,” one of those who wrote a shorter book than did Isaiah, Jeremiah, Ezekiel, and Daniel who are called the “major prophets.” This is also the only Sunday on which we read from the Book of Habakkuk. The prophet asks God why He does not intervene on behalf of His Chosen People to halt the violence and abuse of the invading Babylonians. Even though we read a very short excerpt from Chapter 1 and then jump to Chapter 2, the two parts flow together seamlessly.

Read the First Reading aloud.

1. State in your own words how the Lord responded to Habakkuk’s wondering why God doesn’t seem to care about His people’s troubles.
2. How do we know that God’s answer was not meant only for Habakkuk, but was spoken to all the people?
3. God is all-good and all-powerful, capable of preventing any evil from happening. Why, then, does God permit evil to occur?
4. Talk about the connection between having faith and having patience, as it is expressed in this reading.
5. What can we learn from the fact that God did not strike Habakkuk dead for questioning or challenging Him?
6. The last verse suggests a connection between being a person of faith and being a person of integrity. What might that connection be?

Commentary before the Second Reading: 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14

After reading segments from Saint Paul’s first letter to Saint Timothy for the last 3 weeks, we move this week to Saint Paul’s second letter to his dear friend and co-worker. It offers us a rare, intimate view of the relationship between these two dedicated men of God.

Read the Second Reading aloud.

1. To which sacrament is Saint Paul probably referring in the first sentence?
2. Timothy was a holy man, totally devoted to Jesus Christ; why would Paul tell him to “stir into flame” the gifts of the Holy Spirit that he had received? What does that say to us also?
3. Identify the 2 virtues that Saint Paul would like to see in all Church leaders.
4. In verse 8 what do we learn will be the natural consequences of being a zealous disciple?
5. Two virtues frequently mentioned together in Saint Paul’s letters, how are “faith” and “love” connected?

Commentary before the Gospel Reading: Luke 17: 5-10

When Jesus cautioned his disciples to avoid all sin and even those situations that lead to sin – but also to be quick to forgive another who has sinned – the apostles responded with the request that begins this reading. Look for the “golden nugget” beneath the master/slave setting in the second half of the reading, the implication about our relationship with Almighty God. And remember that Jesus was speaking to people for whom slavery had become a part of everyday life around them.

Read the Gospel Reading aloud.

1. “Hyperbole” (making a point by outrageous exaggeration) was a common literary and oratory technique among Jewish teachers. Point out 2 examples of hyperbole in this reading.
2. What would you say is the “golden nugget” in this reading? Did it lift your heart or disturb you a little?
3. According to Jesus, how much faith is enough?
4. In reality, did Jesus answer the apostles’ request? How so? Essentially, what was Jesus saying to them?

5. What do you think Jesus meant by the words “unprofitable servant”? How might you express that idea?

Applying the Readings to our Daily Lives

1. The virtue “faith” is extolled in each of these 3 readings. In each one, though, it is paired with a second virtue. Go back and identify the companion virtue to faith in each reading. Comment on their connection.
2. When speaking of faith, what does it mean to have the attitude of a servant? Do you possess that attitude?
3. Jesus used hyperbole to describe the power of even the smallest amount of faith. Do you believe that the faith you have right now is sufficient to see you through any difficulty?
4. What could the amount of faith that you have right now accomplish if you simply believed and acted as though it is enough?
5. Then, if one’s faith is already enough, why should a person cultivate an even deeper, stronger faith?
6. Since faith is not academic knowledge, but rather a relationship in which we know God by loving Him, is it possible to have faith without love – or to love without having faith?
7. Recall a time when you cried out to God, “Why? Why?” Did you do so because you lacked faith or because you had faith?
8. How did God respond? What advice would you give yourself now about that?

Closing Prayer

We praise you, Lord Jesus, for you are the Son of God, fully human and fully divine; you are God, and you are Messiah and Savior. We believe in you and we hold fast to this gift of faith that you have implanted within us. Increase our faith and protect it when we are challenged by difficulties. Deepen our love for you, strengthen our integrity, and make us true servants in your name. Amen.” (Sign of the Cross)