

HOMILY for 27th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's First Reading tells us how prophet Habakkuk came to the Lord in prayer for peace, but it seems like his prayer is not heard. Reflecting on it, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Saintly Mrs. Ficalora came to morning Mass as usual, kneeled down, & unburdened herself. "Dear God," she admitted, "sometimes I just don't understand the wisdom of your ways. My neighbor, that godless drunkard Angie D'Onofrio never sets foot in church has won a lottery jackpot twice already. She also has a beach home, three cars, all the jewels a woman could want, & a closet full of furs. Why has she been so blessed & I'm not?"

"Because," God's voice boomed from behind the altar, "she doesn't bug me!"

Anyway, in this Sunday's Gospel, we are told about prophet Habakkuk's desperate prayer to God as following, "How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen! I cry to you, 'Violence!' but you do not intervene. Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery? Destruction & violence are before me; there is strife & clamorous discord." So, prophet Habakkuk evidently expressed his doubts & frustration with the Lord who was supposed to come to save His people & yet would tolerate violence against the innocent. The prophet wondered, "Why would a god who is from eternity holy, immortal, pure, & compassionate toward the misery gaze on the faithless in silence & let the wicked people devour one more just person than Himself? Keep in mind that the Babylonians are more evil than the wicked leaders of Jerusalem. So, why would the Lord allow the Babylonian forces to have swift & sudden battle success over the Israelites? Would there be a method/plan for God's madness?"

I don't know about you, but I would ask the same questions & express similar prayer of desperation to God like prophet Habakkuk did as I see what is going on in our country & around the world these days. We have seen an unprecedented level of senseless violence, especially hateful acts against religion to be on the rise. People have a lot more hate & grievances in the hearts against their neighbors than love & understanding. Everyone seems to focus only on themselves & their benefits instead of their neighbors & the common good. They have allowed the power of darkness & sins to overtake their hearts & souls instead of following the divine light & virtues. Like a possessed person, they have let evil spirits to take over their minds & hearts without knowing it. That is why we have had countless violent shooters & lots of wicked leaders in our country & around the world. Like prophet Habakkuk, we wonder why God would permit darkness & evil spirits to run rampant in our country/world. We are curious to find out how long the Lord would let good people of God suffer misery & ruin under the oppressing hands of these wicked leaders & evil shooters. I would add one more question to the mysterious plan of God, namely, when will the Lord get our evil world & wicked leaders to turn their lives around & stop doing evil things to their neighbors as He did to St. Paul?

Let's try to look for answers for those questions & God's mysterious plan for our time in this homily. For now, let's see how this Sunday's Gospel could provide us guidance & support in this uncertain & confusing time. There we hear this prayer of the Apostles to the Lord, "Increase our faith." Jesus affirms their prayer & reminds them, "If you had faith the size of a mustard seed, you could say to this sycamore, 'Be uprooted & transplanted into the sea,' & it would obey you." So, Jesus wants us to have faith in the divine plan & ask Him to increase it in this uncertain & confusing time. I don't know about you; as I look out to our world & see endless random violence & all kinds of wars happening around the globe, I wonder why the

Lord would let those evil things happen like that. Furthermore, it seems like people who do evil things to their neighbors keep on thriving while good people get one bad thing after another. Perhaps the Lord wants to teach our world a lesson & ask us to hang on tighter to Him. He tells us that if we have a strong faith, we can move mountain, even being able to transplant a sycamore wherever we want. In other words, faith will give us strength & courage to endure trial time & open us up to all sorts of miracles.

Over the years, prophets & religious leaders have tried to figure out why God has allowed evil things & suffering happen in the world. After much reflection, all they could come up with is that it is God's punishment for the past sins of the people of God. All the current suffering is how God made the people of God pay for all the horrible things they did in the past. I do not know if you could come up with a better explanation for all the senseless violence & evil things happen in our country & around the world. So, unless our country/world changes its current way of life & treatment of its neighbors, it will continue to experience all kinds of senseless violence & evil things in its daily life. That is the only way God could get us out of the current cycle of hate & violence.

In the meantime, we ask the Lord to increase our faith as we pray for our own conversion & a desperate change of our country/world from its current way of life & treatment of its neighbors. That way we can see a lot of wonderful miracles & awesome blessings in our daily life instead of all the current senseless acts of hate & violence. Furthermore, we could ask the Lord to drive away all the evil spirits from our country/world. Personally, I have seen my faith grow over years, especially in my years of priesthood. My faith has been tested & pushed to its limit. I have even wondered if God would come to my aid & give me a helping hand in times of need. And God always did. In fact, I did not know whom God would send to replace my retired staff here & at other parishes. To my surprise, God has always sent me the right staff members to help me continue my ministry for His Church.

My dear brothers & sisters, like prophet Habakkuk, we often wonder how long we would have to endure all the sufferings & evil things in our lives/country/world. But, God has a plan for everything. It is all up to us to change our current way of life & come home to Him. When we are able to do that & learn to follow His Commandments, we will be able to witness lots of wonderful miracles & awesome blessings in our daily lives instead of all the current senseless violence & evil things.