

Homily October 2, 2016
27th Sunday Ordinary Time C

Our readings for this Sunday are a fascinating collection. The first reading begins with the lamentations of the prophet Habakkuk and God's response to him. God's reminder to him is about having faith.

In the second reading from the second letter to Timothy from St Paul, we hear the reminder from St Paul to his protégé that from the faith he will increase his trust in the Holy Spirit, bearing the hardships of the Gospel will be worth it in the end.

Finally in the Gospel of Luke we hear the parable of how even the faith the size of a mustard seed will have the ability to command a mulberry tree to be uprooted.

So, when we take all three readings together, we now can recognize the entire lesson:

- Our faith in God will be tested in our life of discipleship.
- Through our faith we will develop our trust in the Holy Spirit.
- And that even the faith the size of the tiniest seed will be able to do wondrous things over time.

So basically we have FAITH, TRUST, PATIENCE. So if this sequence is true, then how do we work on our faith and begin the process ?

We can do over a lifetime through bringing our attention to the three parts of our human identity: Our head, our heart and our hands.

What are the ways we can help our head to increase our faith?

Reading the Bible; studying the bible, taking a class about the scriptures; talking with friends about bible verses and church teachings.

What are the ways we can help our heart to increase our faith?

Plan experiences with the poor folks or folks of different culture or of different ages (older or younger) or folks of different backgrounds.

This is about getting to know people for who they are and simply to be with them. This is about conversation, or doing things together.

What are the ways we can use our hands to deepen our faith?

Do some ministry. Use your hands to do something about the area that you are most concerned about in your neighborhood.

Because our faith matures through these three different of our identities, our head, heart and hands, it will naturally take time before you will be aware that your faith has deepened. Once that faith deepens, it will be then be possible for you to recognize that your trust in God and the Holy Spirit has deepened as well.

When your trust in increases, you gain more courage to make a leap of faith in your life.

Let us look at the life of St Francis to see how his life might provide some insight into our own lives. Francis was the son of a wealthy cloth merchant in Assisi. He was known as a party person – and had many friends among the young folks in Assisi. His first choice was to be a cloth merchant like his father. As he started to manage his father's store, he found himself giving away his father's beautiful cloth because he felt sorry for the folks who could not afford to pay for them.

Well, his father did not let him run his store after that !

The next choice Francis made was to be a crusader to help protect the holy Lands from invaders. His father supported Francis by giving him a beautiful horse and a suit of armor to help him be ready for his new life as a crusader. Francis went off with a great good by party by the whole town.

On the way to the Holy Lands, he meets other crusaders on their way as well. Many of them did not have suits of armor nor as good a horse as he did, so, Francis traded them with his possessions. Francis finally returns home without his horse nor his suit of armor and quietly lives with his parents once again.

In assisi he hears of the neighboring town Perugia that was attacking their town. So Francis decides to join the guerilla warriors to protect his home town. After only a short time, Francis is captured and imprisoned in Perugia. He is now prisoner of War !

His captors realize that he is the son of a wealthy family, so they demand a ransom for his release from prison. Francis' parents give over the ransom and retrieve their now very sick son and bring him home to nurse him back to health.

During this time of recuperation and recovery from his imprisonment, Francis would wander thru the streets of Assisi to get some fresh air. One day he drops by the abandoned Church of St Damian. He goes into the abandoned chapel, and sits down in the front pew to pray before a beautiful Cross hanging over the altar.

He prays for insight and wisdom about what he should do with his life, as the three attempts have all ended in failure. As he was praying, he realized that the image of Jesus on the cross was speaking to him in a loud voice: My church is in ruin. Go and repair my church!

Francis looks around the chapel, and sees that it is a mess! Windows were broken, pews were badly worn, the doorway was broken. Yes, the church was in ruin. So Francis heard the plea, felt sorry for this chapel in his heart, and then went about using his hands to rebuild the chapel! He turned the repairs into a party time and invited his life-long friends to come and help him. And so they merrily joined in and began to re-build the church.

What began as a simple leap of faith by doing something in the church, unfolded in the coming months and years as Francis began to bring together over 5,000 men to be part of his way of life – dedicated to prayer, openness to the God working in their lives, and then doing something to re-build the broken down churches. In his lifetime, Francis is known to have worked on 3 churches which still exist today.

Francis had no idea that these chapels would still be standing today beautifully preserved for all to see. He would no idea that God would use him to build a new religious order of wandering or mendicants (begging) called the Franciscans. He would no idea that God would use him to create the four major branches of the Franciscan men's communities in the world.

This is all about God working thru Francis to unfold God's vision for the world. This was never to be Francis' vision, This was God's vision.

So for each of us today, we Franciscan men and women dedicate our lives to doing God's work. We are best at starting something - whether it is making sandwiches to give to the poor or sharing the pews to those who are tired. We have the faith to give us trust in the Holy Spirit who will use our efforts for God's benefit in fulfilling God's vision in these stressful situations.

In my own life, I simply wanted to give my life to build the church thru teaching. This teaching opportunities for me lead from one thing to another - and has unfolded in my preaching, and being a priest and now pastor. Trust me I never had any thought being a priest nor a pastor when I entered the Franciscans. This is God's vision for my life !

In a similar fashion God's vision for St Boniface Parish has unfolded every so beautifully over the past decades to unfold our leadership and witness to the entire world of what it means to be social justice minded parish ! Again this is God's vision which is unfolding right before us.

So you now see then the real life examples which illustrate our lectionary readings for this Sunday.

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