

## **27<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME - C**

(Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4; 2 Tim 1:6-8, 13-14; Lk 17:5-10)

Excerpts of Benedict XVI – Homily - 03 October 2010

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05 October 2025

Brothers and sisters, every liturgical assembly is a place of God's presence. Gathered together for the Holy Eucharist, disciples of the Lord are immersed in Christ's redeeming sacrifice. They proclaim that he is Risen, is alive and is the Giver of life, and witness that his Presence is grace, strength and joy. We open our hearts to his Word and welcome the gift of his presence. All the texts of this Sunday's Liturgy speak to us of faith, which is the foundation of the whole of Christian life. Jesus taught his disciples to grow in faith, to believe and to entrust themselves increasingly to him, in order to build their own lives on the rock.

For this reason they asked him "increase our faith!" (Lk 17: 5). What they asked the Lord for is very important; it is the fundamental request. Disciples do not ask for material gifts; they do not ask for privileges but for the grace of faith, which guides and lights their whole life. They ask for the grace to recognize God and to be in a close relationship with him, receiving from him all his gifts, even those of courage, love and hope.

Jesus, without directly answering their prayer, has recourse to a baffling image to express the incredible vitality of faith. Just as a lever raises something far heavier than its own weight, so faith, even a crumb of faith, can do unthinkable, extraordinary things, such as uproot a great tree and plant it in the sea. Faith trusting in Christ, welcoming him, letting him transform us, following him to the very end makes humanly impossible things possible in every situation.

The Prophet Habakkuk also bears witness to this in the First Reading. He implores the Lord, starting with a dreadful situation of violence, injustice and oppression. And even in this difficult, insecure situation, the Prophet introduces a vision that offers an inside view of the plan that God is outlining and bringing to fulfilment in history: "Look at the proud! Their spirit is not right in them, but the righteous live by their faith" (Hab 2: 4). The godless person, the one who does not behave in accordance with God, who trusts in his own power but is relying on a frail reality that will therefore give way, is destined to fall. The righteous person, on the other hand, trusts in a hidden but sound reality; he trusts in God and for this reason will have life.

Brothers and sisters, preserve this precious treasure of faith of your Church; may Christian values always guide your decisions and your actions! The second part of today's Gospel presents another teaching, a teaching of humility that is nevertheless closely linked to faith. Jesus invites us to be humble and suggests the example of a servant (slave) who has worked in the fields. When he returns home, the master asks him to go on working.

According to the mentality of Jesus' time the master had every right to do this. The servant owed his master total availability; and the master did not feel under any obligation to him for having carried out the orders he had received. Jesus makes us aware that, before God, we are in a similar situation: we are God's servants, we are not his creditors but are always indebted to him, because we owe him everything since everything is a gift from him.

Accepting and doing his will is the approach to have every day, at every moment of our life. Before God we must never present ourselves as if we believe we have done a service and deserve a great reward. This is an illusion that can be born in everyone, even in people who work very hard in the Lord's service, in the Church. Rather, we must be aware that in reality we never do enough for God. We must say, as Jesus' suggests: "we are worthless slaves; we have done only what we ought to have done!" This is an attitude of humility that really puts us in our place and permits the Lord to be very generous to us. If we do God's will today with humility, without claiming anything from him, it will be Jesus himself who serves us, who helps us, who encourages us, who gives us strength and serenity.

In today's Second Reading the Apostle Paul too speaks of faith. Timothy is asked to have faith and, through it, to exercise charity. The disciple is also urged to rekindle in faith the gift of God that is in him through the laying on of Paul's hands, in other words the gift of Ordination, received so that he might carry out the apostolic ministry as a collaborator of Paul (cf. 2 Tm 1: 6). He must not let this gift be extinguished but must make it ever more alive through faith. And the Apostle adds: "for God did not give us a spirit of cowardice, but rather a spirit of power and love and self-discipline".

Brothers and sisters, do not fear to live and to witness to the faith in the various contexts of society, in the many situations of human existence, especially in those that are difficult! May faith give you the power of God in order to be ever confident and courageous, to go ahead with new determination. And when you come up against the opposition of the world, may you hear the Apostle's words: "Do not be ashamed, then, of testifying to our Lord" (cf. v. 8). One should be ashamed of evil, of what offends God. One should live courageously the values of the Gospel to make the light of goodness shine out! "Hold to the standard of sound teaching that you have heard." "Guard the good treasure entrusted to you, with the help of the Holy Spirit." With God's power everything is possible! May this Eucharist help you and lead you to grow deeper in your faith. Amen!