

TWENTY-SEVENTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME

Habakkuk = huh-BAK-kuhk or HAB-uh-kuhk

An exhortatory reading from one of the minor Prophets we don't often hear from in the lectionary. In this one, Habakkuk voices timely frustration and receives encouraging counsel from the Lord.

This question focuses the first half of the reading, which voices Habakkuk's plea.

The Lord's answer is succinct. A tone of clarity and reassurance carries through.

This ends on a good note.

LECTIONARY #141

READING I Habakkuk 1.2-3; 2.2-4

A reading from the book of the Prophet Habakkuk.

"O Lord, how long shall I cry for help,
and you will not listen?

Or cry to you 'Violence!'

and you will not save?

Why do you make me see wrongdoing
and look at trouble?

Destruction and violence are before me;
strife and contention arise."

Then the Lord answered me and said:

"Write the vision;

make it plain on tablets,

so that a runner may read it.

For there is still a vision for the appointed time;
it speaks of the end, and does not lie.

If it seems to tarry, wait for it;

it will surely come, it will not delay.

Look at the proud person!

Their spirit is not right in them,

but the righteous person lives by their faith."

READING I

Oppressed people of every age ask Habakkuk's question, "O Lord, how long shall I cry for help, and you will not listen?" How long before the Lord intervenes and stops the "violence." This violence, in Hebrew, *chamas*, denotes the calculated actions of arrogant and greedy people who take advantage of others and diminish their chances for a full and peaceful life. The Prophet sees *chamas* everywhere: destruction, accusation and litigation, clamorous debate, and misery. Even people with only slight control over

the lives of others too often wield their bit of power for harm rather than for good.

The Lord does not answer Habakkuk's question, "How long?", but tells him to write down clearly the vision that announces the downfall of tyrants of every ilk and the Lord's coming reign over all the earth. As these events unfold, the long-suffering will realize that the Lord heard their cries. In the meantime, the task of the just is to live with integrity and thus to display their faith that the Lord is dependable and at work. Despite appearances to the contrary, the divine vision is pressing on to fulfillment.

READING II

In the verse that precedes this reading, Paul expresses his confidence that the faith that dwelt in Timothy's grandmother Lois and in his mother, Eunice, now dwells in Timothy. Timothy, however, needs to live this faith more resolutely. He needs to "rekindle the gift [Greek *charisma*] of God," that is, the unique talents he received when Paul laid hands on him. To bear witness to the Lord effectively, Timothy must practise and develop pastoral skills.