

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Hb 1:2-3; 2:2-4; Ps 95; 2 Tm 1:6-8, 13-14; Lk 17:5-10

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As we approach the end of summer and even draw near to the end of the liturgical year, it seems as if this Sunday's readings call on us to hang in there, to persevere in following the Lord. The first reading is from the prophet Habakkuk, and many date it to the time after the death of one of the best kings in the kingdom of Judah, King Josiah, a great reformer. Alas, he was killed in an ill-conceived battle, and his reform ran aground. Good people like our prophet saw the wicked prosper and the just suffer, and wondered where God was in all this; "Deuteronomic theology" said that reward and punishment took place in this life, but reality belied this. Perhaps after an all-night vigil, the prophet was told to write down his vision in letters so clear that it could be read by a runner, or, perhaps, so that the one who reads it runs. In other words, wait for the Lord: when He acts, things will happen quickly. The difficult verse 4 (the first part refers to the rash, or to the proud?) has become famous: the righteous person by keeping the faith shall live (cf. Is 30:15; see Rm 1:17; Ga 3:11; He 10:35-39).

The psalm is recited daily by priests and religious: "if today you hear His voice, harden not your hearts." The author of Hebrews, in He 3:7-4:11, discusses it as part of his exhortation, that we may struggle to enter into God's rest at the end of days. Along these lines, even Timothy is told to rekindle the flame of his gift: he —we— must not be cowardly, but patiently and bravely endure, with the strength that God gives us, the hardships which come with following Christ; we must carefully guard the great good which has been entrusted to us.

The gospel seems to exhort us to two things: first, to have real faith, which can move mountains. Secondly, to gird the apron of service round our loins and get to work without needing to be pampered like weak, uncertain children: we shall be able to rest, and eat, once we have finished what we are obliged to do.