

27th Sunday per Annum - C
Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4;
II Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14;
Luke 17:5-10
Little Flower - 10/6/13

My Brothers and Sisters,

Belief in the resurrection of Jesus, which is the heart of Christian faith, implies belief that Jesus has already triumphed over sin, suffering, sickness and death. However, there is a major disconnect between what we believe as Christians and what we see and experience in the world. What we see and experience can challenge our faith.

As Christians, we are sometimes discouraged or even frustrated by what goes on in our world. The Prophet Habakkuk captures our feelings: *“How long, O LORD? I cry for help but you do not listen! I cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but you do not intervene. Why do you let me see ruin; why must I look at misery?”*

We live in a very violent world. We have only to think about the acts of terrorism throughout the world, including within our country. We have only to think about the mass shootings here in our country: Columbine; the movie theater in Aurora, CO; the elementary school in Newtown, CT; and elsewhere. We have only to think about the number of murders here in our own country. Chicago had 532 murders in 2012! This year we have had 104 murders in Indianapolis. I think particularly of Officer Rod Bradbury. We have only to think about the physical and sexual abuse of children.

If we think about violence, we also have to include the million children killed each year by abortion. We do not think as much about abortion because it does not get the publicity the other murders receive. Likewise, we do not hear about the people affected by an abortion as we did in the case of Officer Bradbury who left a grieving family and grieving comrades. However, we must not deceive ourselves. Abortion is a violent act. Every abortion destroys an innocent life. The brutality of abortion was never more clear than in the trial of Kermit Gosnell, the Philadelphia abortion provider.

There are many other things in our society that can discourage and frustrate us as Christians. We see the breakdown of the family. We see the loss of traditional moral values. We see the numbers of people who live in poverty, especially children. We see the problems in our economy. We see the dysfunction in our government. We see the neglect of persons with disabilities. We see elderly and dying persons who are alone, afraid, in pain, and unloved by others. We see how often financial considerations dictate societal decisions.

In response to Habakkuk’s plaintive cry, God urges patience and faith. Paul reminded Timothy that *“God did not give us a spirit of cowardice but rather of power and love and self-control...”* and challenged him to *“bear your share of hardship for the gospel with the strength that comes from God.”* Finally, the Gospel calls us to deepen our faith and reminds us that at the end of the day, we *“we have done what we were obliged to do.”*

My brothers and sisters, God has given us a spirit of power and love. Today is Respect Life Sunday. As Christians, we need to witness to the right to life and inherent dignity of every person from the moment of conception to natural death. During his life, Cardinal Joseph Bernardin constantly reminded us that life issues are a “seamless garment.” Since all life issues are interconnected, we need to advocate a consistent ethic of life. We need to be engaged citizens, communicating with our US senators and representatives as well as our State senators and representatives on life issues. When we vote, we need to look at candidates for their stands on life issues. We need to look for volunteer opportunities where we can act to improve the quality of life for the vulnerable. Finally, many of us could make our family members who are elderly or sick or poor a higher priority. If we do all these things, at the end of the day, we will be able to say that we have done what we were obliged to do.