

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time C  
October 3, 2004

By Father Charles Bowes

Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4  
Psalm 95:1-2, 6-9  
2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14  
Luke 17:5-10

## *Not everything depends on God.*

The gospels were written for the first Christians. They were written to encourage them. The gospel of Saint Luke is no exception; his gospel was written to encourage the Christians he knew. It is in that light that we are to read the gospel of today.

The people around Jesus went to him and told him: "Please, give us more faith. We haven't enough of it. We can't do anything as we are. We can't even start. Please help us. We are very weak. We are beginners. You are so holy. We aren't, but we would love to be like you."

They were like a businessman who says, "I haven't sufficient money. Wait until I have some more, and I will start." Since he doesn't do any business, he never will start.

They were like a farmer who says: "I don't have sufficient seed to sow all my land. Wait until I have some more, and I will start." As he does not sow the seed he has, he will never get any more seed, and he will go hungry.

The disciples came to Jesus. They asked: "Give us more faith, and we will work wonders," implying that their faith was so small they couldn't do a thing.

Jesus, in a sense, does not listen to their request at all. He does not promise them more faith. He does not pledge them anything at all. Jesus just says, "Start with the little you have, and you will get all you want." He is saying, in effect, "Trust, believe, surrender, let go." Often, it is only when we are forced to let go that we actually do that.

He unmasks in them, and he unmasks in us, one of the ways we use to escape our responsibilities. We can't pray, because we haven't sufficient faith. We can't be charitable, because we are very weak Christians. We can't organize ourselves for justice, because we are only beginners. We can't stop drinking, because we haven't sufficient grace. On this Respect Life Sunday, we can't do much to promote the life of the unborn and the old and the imprisoned and the poor...because it is just too overwhelming. Jesus objected: "Don't kid yourselves. Don't speak like that. Don't even ask for more, but start with what you have!" All we have, after all, is where we are right now. Begin there.

This weekend, our Catholic tradition puts before us the weak and the vulnerable of every age and state of life and calls us to a greater sensitivity and caring and respect. The holy food we share here is marked by its fragileness and vulnerability. It has no choice but to become what we ask of it - the bearer of the glorified

Lord Jesus, nourishing us for everlasting life. May we be transformed into that great Sacrament for the world we touch.

Some years ago, there was a woman named Dorothy Day whom many considered a living saint. She started all kinds of activities, not the least of which was the Catholic Worker, a newspaper selling for a penny and a place for the poor to get food and clothing - a place where she also lived - places and things that still exist. But she objected when people called her a saint. She said, "Don't make it too easy for yourself. You say I am a saint to convince yourself that I am different from you. I am not different from you. I am not a saint. I am like you. You could easily do what I do. You don't need any more than you have!"

Not everything depends on God.