

27<sup>th</sup> Sunday, 2007

Today's readings speak about faith. The prophet Habakkuk is writing sometime between 605-597 B.C. Assyria had already wiped out the northern part of Israel in the 700s. Now the southern part called Judah has been overrun by the new super-power of the day, the Babylonians. In the midst of this defeat and destruction the prophet begins to question God: What are you doing? Why are we, your people, suffering so much? And the Lord answers: Be patient! Wait! Do not be rash! Live by faith! The just, because of their faith, shall live. This last sentence is a very important one. St. Paul will use it, and it became the battle cry of Martin Luther in the sixteenth century and of all the other reformers of this time who claimed that the Catholic Church was not following it but instead teaching its members to rely on their good works.

St. Paul not only quoted this sentence, he lived it. He suffered imprisonments, shipwreck, and beatings, but he never ceased to believe and trust the Lord Jesus. I know whom I have trusted, he wrote. That is, he knew he could rely on the Lord, just as we would say that we can trust someone because we know his or her character. We must trust that God will see us through our difficult times.

In today's gospel Jesus says that if we had faith the size of a mustard seed, we could move mountains. He himself did that. He trusted in his father even when he was confronted with the cross, with defeat and death. And down through the centuries others have imitated him. We call them saints. This past Thursday we celebrated the feast of St. Francis of Assisi who trusted in Christ's love for him so completely that he kept trying to be poorer and poorer so that he could rely more totally on Christ. And in our day we have the example of Mother Teresa who kept trusting in Christ's love for her even though she could not find him or feel his presence in her prayers for almost fifty years. Despite this trial of faith she continued her work for the poor. A sister overheard her praying one day before an image of Christ and saying to him: "I have never refused you anything."

But we must not misinterpret this trusting in the Lord. True trust expresses itself in action, in the details of our daily lives. A Dick Folger gives a good example of this. A poor man prays to God for help. God answers him, telling him that he will win the lottery. But nothing happens for months. So the man asks God: What happened to your promise.? God answers him: you have to buy the lottery ticket first. Yes, as the old saying goes: we must work as if

everything depended on us, but believe (trust) as if everything depended on God. Yes, faith can move mountains. But our faith must also put us at the bottom of the mountain, trying to do what we can to uproot it. That is what Mother Teresa did; that is what Francis of Assisi did; that is what the Lord Jesus did. That is what we too must do. We must live in faith; we must trust God with our lives. But we must do so actively.