

## "FIRST IMPRESSIONS"

27<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY -C-

October 5, 2025

[Habakkuk 1: 2-3, 2: 2-4; Ps 95; 2 Timothy 1: 6-8, 13-14; Luke 17: 5-10](#)

*By: Jude Siciliano, OP*



### Dear Preachers:

The prophet Habakkuk lived in the chaotic period during the seventh and sixth centuries before Christ when the Babylonians ruled. But his lament could be prayed in too many modern settings to count Ukraine, Gaza, Sudan, Myanmar, Syria, Ethiopia, etc. Many nations and peoples could cry out with Habakkuk, "How long, O Lord? I cry for help, but you do not listen. I cry out to you, 'Violence!' but you do not intervene....Destruction and violence are before me, there is strife and clamorous discord." I imagine that a prayer service for any of the victims suffering violence, starvation, and forced migrations throughout the world could use today's Habakkuk reading as an opening prayer. As could those living in our inner cities, who have to deal with unsafe neighborhoods, poor education for their children and unemployment.

The prophet's language is bold and might make the pious uncomfortable. How dare anyone speak in such a manner to God! Who do we creatures think we are, anyway? But prophets and saints have no such qualms about being so blunt and honest with God. They trust their relationship with God is strong enough to stand the strongest complaints. You can say anything to a really close friend; lay out your feelings with all their raw emotions. There are situations that are so bad, when a people have nowhere else to turn and God is the only one to complain to and the only One who will listen with a sympathetic ear. Who else has the power to change the dreadful situations that are beyond mere human effort? Like Habakkuk, with tears in our eyes, we look out at the seeming insurmountable evils in the world and lament, "What's taking you so long, O God?!"

The threats confronting Habakkuk and the people of Judah weren't only from outside oppressors like the Babylonians. The death of the reformer King Josiah brought to power his son, Jehoiakim, who reversed his father's attempts to improve the nation and the lot of the people. Habakkuk cried out against the corruption of Judah's leaders and warned that the Babylonians would soon be instruments of divine punishment. How hard it is when ordinary people suffer at the hands of their own corrupt military and political forces. Who can rescue those with no power; who can bring relief to those wearied by affliction? They have no earthly power to appeal to; so, they turn and cry out to God, "How long, O Lord?"

One of the prophet's tasks is to name the pain the people experience and voice their lament. But the second part of the Habakkuk reading reflects another function of the prophet: to call a suffering people to turn to God in faith and trust. It may seem that God has forgotten them in their misery, but the prophet encourages them, "For the vision still has its time, presses on to fulfillment and will not disappoint." God may not be giving a rapid solution to current difficulties; but God is giving a vision that a stressed people can place their hope in.

Habakkuk offers encouragement to those who are in dire straits and can't help themselves. But what about the rest of us who hear God's intentions to help those afflicted? Through the prophet we hear where God's heart lies – with those who have no one on their side and can't help themselves. So, hearing what God has promised these people, we are urged to do something for them, whether the victims of violence and injustice be local or across the globe. And for those already involved in efforts to help those suffering starvation, oppression, violence, plagues like AIDS, war, etc., the prophet's vision can sustain us in our long efforts. The "vision" assures us that God is with us in our concern and labors with us to help us "keep on, keepin' on." People laboring to make a difference against seeming-impossible odds can succumb to discouragement and burn out. While the first part of the Habakkuk reading can serve as a prayer for those trapped by powerful and cruel forces; the second half is an encouragement to those who have heard the call to join in the struggle to free the oppressed and be hope for the hopeless.

The apostles in today's gospel voice their sense of urgent need to Jesus. We have to consider the context of their request. Jesus has just finished instructing them of the serious consequences of causing another to sin ("better that a millstone be put around their neck....") and has also told them they must forgive someone, even if that person "...wrongs you seven times a day." It takes enormous faith to live Jesus' teachings and face the demands of discipleship. A disciple can easily feel inadequate. Where to turn? – the disciples know – they ask Jesus, "Increase our faith." They want more faith so that they can be the kind of disciples Jesus is teaching them to be.

But Jesus shifts their attention away from thinking about quantity to considering the quality of the faith they already have. Even a tiny bit of faith, "the size of a mustard seed," can be very powerful and requires appropriate action. If we wait around for a dose of some imagined heroic faith, we are liable to sit on our hands and do nothing. Jesus is encouraging his followers to forget about how much faith they think or feel they have. They are to act on the faith they already have. For example, a person with "mustard seed faith," hearing Habakkuk's lament today, would set about doing something to make things right – whether it be in our immediate families, local church community, or in the larger world in which we live.

We need, Jesus tells us, to have faith in the power of God. With just a little faith, we disciples could accomplish great things. Jesus' listeners certainly would have been impressed by the example he gave of faith's ability to uproot the mulberry tree. It was notoriously hard to dig up. Its roots went deep, were very extensive and were strong enough to penetrate a rock foundation. Jesus invited the apostles, to trust in the faith they had and to act on it. No excuses about not having enough faith – that is just a delaying tactic, an excuse for inaction and shows a lack of faith in God's desire to work through our efforts. Jesus encourages us to take the risks necessary to set things right. On our own we might not be able to uproot deep seated evils and destructive patterns, but we can with our "mustard seed faith" in God.

Jesus tells a parable about a very hard-working servant who does what he or she is supposed to do. Disciples, equipped with "mustard seed faith" must set about doing the sometimes very hard

work our faith urges us to do. All thoughts of reward or acknowledgment are to be put aside as distractions from the labors at hand. We who work in church ministry can get side-tracked from doing what needs to be done, if we place too much emphasis on our popularity, reputations or rate of success in accomplishing great projects. If we think we are so very important for what we have done, Jesus' sobering reminder should set us straight, "When you have done all you have been commanded, say, 'We are unprofitable servants, we have done what we were obliged to do.'"

Are we just useless servants after all? Are we only tools in God's tool box, useful for specific tasks, but mere instruments in God's hands to accomplish a divine plan that needs our cooperation and skills? Of course not. In fact, in our work for the Lord we accomplish a lot, sometimes immediately, but mostly over a life time of daily service and seeming insignificant labors. The parable of the servant reminds us to keep things in focus. Whether it be through herculean effort or day-to-day fidelity to our roles in life, our accomplishments come because the One who has called us to our tasks has worked through us. Is God grateful for our fidelity? Of course. But don't let it go to our heads; keep things in perspective. We are servants, we understand our roles. God doesn't owe us any guaranteed return on our labors. Our ministry will yield fruit---but how much and when, is in God's hands. We do what our God has called us to do. And aren't we thankful that we are not the ones in charge, but only servants?

**Click here for a link to this Sunday's readings:**

<https://bible.usccb.org/bible/readings/100525.cfm>



## **JUSTICE BULLETIN BOARD**

***We have done what we were obliged to do.***

—Luke 17: 10

Okay, so you have finally arrived, crossed to the proverbial pearly gates. You find yourself face-to-face with God, the God of infinite, selfless love. "Hmm," your half of the dialogue concludes, "Well, I did what I was obliged to do." Kind of falls flat in the face of so much love, doesn't it? If good work is expected of the servant in today's gospel, why should a disciple of Jesus think faithful loving service is not the way to follow the master teacher? Continuing even further, if we are truly made in the image of God, shouldn't we be love to the world? Our Church has given us some guidelines; now we must exercise our hearts, stretch our souls. Here is a little checklist for "Works of Mercy101."

### **Spiritual Works of Mercy**

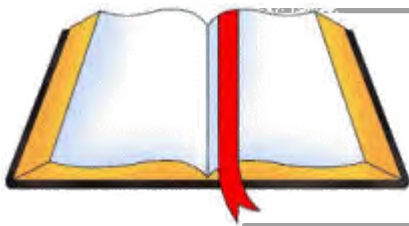
- Comfort the sorrowing —Be someone to lean on in times of hurt and sadness.
- Counsel the doubtful—Be a good listener and let others know how good they are.
- Instruct the ignorant—Share your advice and experience, gently and lovingly when asked.
- Warn the sinner—Let others know there are better choices.
- Forgive all injuries—Don't carry a grudge and go easy on yourself.

- Bear wrongs patiently—Give others and yourself the room to make mistakes.
- Pray for the living and the dead—include the whole human family in your prayers.
- Corporal Works of Mercy
- Feed the hungry—Share what you have with those who need it, down the street or around the world.
- Give drink to the thirsty—Share your joy and hope with those whose lives are dry and lonely and with those who are literally dying of thirst.
- Clothe the naked—Stand up for those who are most weak and vulnerable; advocate for those whose voices are not heard.
- Shelter the homeless—Welcome everyone in your heart and help give people simple, decent places to lay their heads.
- Visit the imprisoned—Help prisoners and those who are confined due to fear, illness, or sadness.
- Visit the sick—Be there for people who need you.
- Bury the dead—Love and respect the person who has died.

These works are just the tip for a life of discipleship, but they are a good place to start (and add caring for our common home for good measure).

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## FAITH BOOK



*Mini-reflections on the Sunday scripture readings designed for persons on the run.*

*"Faith Book" is also brief enough to be posted in the Sunday parish bulletins people take home.*

### From today's 2<sup>nd</sup> Letter to Timothy reading:

"I remind you to stir into flame  
the gift of God that you have  
through the imposition of hands."

### Reflection:

Paul was writing to his young disciple Timothy, but whatever our life's vocation, each of us has been given special charisms, gifts of service, that we are called to exercise – not only in the church, but in the wider world. Like a burning fire those gifts can diminish if not nurtured. So, Paul wants us to tend the flame that burns in us; stir up the ashes, add fuel and fan the flames. We can do that through daily prayer, scripture reading, and at this Eucharistic celebration.

### So, we ask ourselves:

- Do I have regular spiritual practices that form part of my daily life?
- Do I need to revive them or find more appropriate ones for this stage of my life?

### POSTCARDS TO DEATH ROW INMATES

*"One has to strongly affirm that condemnation to the death penalty is an inhuman measure that humiliates personal dignity, in whatever form it is carried out."*

---Pope Francis

Inmates on death row are the most forgotten people in the prison system. Each week I am posting in this space several inmates' names and locations. I invite you to write a postcard to one or more of them to let them know that: we have not forgotten them; are praying for them and their families; or whatever personal encouragement you might like to give them. *If the inmate responds, you might consider becoming pen pals.*

#### Please write to:

- John Williams      #0599379 (On death row since 3/5/1998)
- Danny Frogg      #0137368 (3/27/1998)
- Timmy Grooms      #0158506 (4/27/1998)

---Central Prison P.O. 247 Phoenix, MD 21131

Please note: **Central Prison** is in Raleigh, NC., but for security purposes, mail to inmates is processed through a clearing house at the above address in Maryland.

For more information on the Catholic position on the death penalty go to the Catholic Mobilizing Network: <http://catholicismobilizing.org/resources/cacp/>

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Fr. Jude Siciliano, OP.

**St. Albert Priory**

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We have compiled a new CD for sale:

- This CD contains 2,098 reflections with at least three "First Impressions" reflections for each Sunday in each of the three Liturgical years and broken into the categories: Advent, Christmas Season, Lent, Triduum, Easter, Ordinary Time, Solemnities and Feasts. Plus, important book reviews are also included. This newest Version, "9.2", still contains Fr. Jude's original WordPerfect Files, plus updated and edited Word & PDF files with the original WordPerfect dead links removed.
- If you are a preacher, lead a Lectionary-based scripture group, or are a member of a liturgical team, this CD will be helpful in your preparation process. Individual worshipers report they also use these reflections as they prepare for Sunday liturgy.
- You can order the CD by going to our webpage - [www.PreacherExchange.com](http://www.PreacherExchange.com) and clicking on the "First Impressions" CD link on the left.

### ***FREE EMAILS:***

We have two English email lists available:

1. "[FIRST IMPRESSIONS](#)"
  - a. A preacher's early reflections on the upcoming Sunday's readings and liturgy, always at least one week ahead of the Liturgical Calendar. "A tool to help Preachers prepare for their next trip to the Ambo." Available in Spanish & English and authored by Fr. *Jude Siciliano*, OP.
  - b. [Click Here](#) to Sign Up.
2. "[VOLUME II](#)"
  - ☉ These reflections follow the Liturgical Calendar and appear here about mid-week each week. They are written by various guest authors.

If you would like to submit a reflection of your own, then [Click Here](#) to send it as a "Request to Post" to the Webmaster. Deadline is Monday of each week for the upcoming Sunday.

### ***OUR WEBSITE:***

<https://www.PreacherExchange.com> - Where you will find Preachers Exchange, which includes "First Impressions," and "Volume 2" as well as articles, book reviews, daily homilies and other material pertinent to preaching and Scripture reflection.

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