

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C)

October 5, 2025

“The journey of faith”

There is a story told about the great violinist Paganini (1782-1840) who came out before his audience and discovered as the applause ended that there was something wrong with his violin. He looked at it a second and saw it was not his famous and valuable violin.

The famous violinist stepped behind the curtain for a moment to think of where he left it, and discovered that someone had stolen his violin and replaced it with a second hand one. He remained in the back for a moment and then came out to announce, “Ladies and gentlemen, I will demonstrate that music is not in the instrument but in the soul.” Paganini played as he had never played before, and out of that secondhand instrument, the music poured forth until his audience was enraptured with enthusiasm and the applause almost lifted the roof off the building. The famous violinist revealed that the music was not in the instrument, but in his very soul.

Faith leads to duty well done. This is the message in all three readings. The sixth century BC prophet Habakkuk writes to Jerusalem residents, who were in despair at their city’s downfall and their destruction at the hands of invading Babylonians. In the middle of the siege of Jerusalem, the people began to wonder if God cared for them anymore, and if he did care, could he do anything to help them? Habakkuk sets these human reflections down in writing, as many of us do when life seems only to be going downhill. *“How long, O Lord? I cry for help, but you do not listen! I cry out to you, ‘Violence,!’ but you do not intervene”* (1:2).

One cannot know the depth or strength of faith until it is tested, and they pass the test. These moments come from stressful experiences, including being fired from a job, a severe financial crisis, making a humiliating mistake, the abandonment of a close friend, divorce, knowledge that a loved one has a serious illness, or the reality that your parish life is about to change dramatically.

In these moments, some despair and leave the faith. That was true six centuries before Christ, and it is true today. But Habakkuk believed and preached

God's ultimate victory: the just man, because of his faith, will live. Our continuing challenge is to do our duty without giving up on God.

For those in these terrible moments, Saint Paul stands as a patron and example. Paul wrote to Timothy from prison around 67 A.D. knowing that he was to be executed. Paul had been imprisoned once before, but then believers never left his side. While he was in prison this time, the emperor Nero set fire to Rome and was about to blame the strange and poorly understood Christians.

Timothy, a young pastor put in place by Paul, was so loved by Paul that he refers to Timothy as his son. The last known letter to Timothy was a rousing battle cry to keep the faith when it makes no sense to do so. And he did, and became a saint.

Last week, we heard the story of Lazarus and the rich man, and Our Lord's call to care for the poor. In the four verses preceding today's passage, Jesus told his Apostles that while the Pharisees held people to a high standard of belief and practice, Jesus would hold his followers to an even higher standard of believe and practice.

We are all on the Journey of Faith, which can be a journey of fatigue. Journey of Faith is a call to prepare for change by prayer, reflection, response, and openness to the Spirit. Change is coming to the archdiocese, and it is better to prepare for it.

Journey of Faith is a call to plan for a better future. The surveys have led to models for review, and those models contain opportunities for re-evangelization, vibrant liturgical life, and better utilization of resources. Thoughtful feedback will make the plan better.

Journey of Faith is a call to persevere in love. Charity, or love, is one of our core values, which means seeking the good of others as we meet their needs. In this planning process, faith calls us to preserve in this most basic and important virtue. Faith is the beginning and love is the end by which we will be judged.

The Blessed Mother is a pillar of faith. A woman of outstanding faith, Mary conceived God's Son and followed Jesus to the cross, enduring his death and waiting for the coming of the promised Spirit. May our Mother guide this Journey of Faith. God bless you.