



Homily for 10/6/2019

27th Sun. in Ordinary Time, C

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How Long, O Lord?

“How long, O Lord?” This is the cry of the Prophet Habakkuk as he sees the destruction of Jerusalem from within. The Northern Kingdom of Israel had already been taken into Exile in Assyria. The Southern Kingdom of Judah was on the brink of the same destruction at the hands of the Babylonians. But rather than fidelity to God in this time of crisis, he saw corruption and lawlessness all around him, and he laments that God doesn’t seem to be acting. “I cry out to you, ‘Violence!’ but you do not intervene.”

This seems like the cry of many these days, including myself! Society seems to be collapsing once again. The world seems to be going astray and there is strife and clamorous discord all around. For instance, on a national level there is radical division in the political sphere. It has become so polarized that even marriages and families have split apart along party lines. Now there is the specter of impeachment against the holder of the highest office in our land and everything emanating from both sides is calculated to elicit emotions and capitalize on rage and wrath – demonizing one another so as to gain more power. On a local level, we are encountering the tyranny of moral relativism and, with a bit of fear of retaliation, I mention that there is a Gay Pride march scheduled for Chattanooga this afternoon. If you support it you are ‘woke’; if you question it, you are automatically a bigot. I am not a bigot, but I do question it. Walking the same streets as we walk for Corpus Christi and Our Lady of Guadalupe will be many who hold up the lifestyle of acting on same sex attractions as something to be promoted and celebrated. Ironically, in that same buzz of energy for supposed tolerance, are those ready to decimate, denigrate and depose anyone who would dare question whether or not this is a good thing to celebrate. Even within the Church there is a dark night. A Synod of Bishops is about to begin in Rome, studying the Amazon region where the *Instrumentum Laboris*, or ‘working document,’ seems to contain actual heresies and syncretistic tendencies that confuse the Catholic faith with secular and pagan notions of the world. These notions reduce the saving message of the Gospel to a commentary on environmentalism and secular values. The previously condemned Marxist ideology mixed with Christianity known as Liberation Theology is openly embraced without any nuance, not to mention other attacks against ancient and long-standing disciplines and wisdom of the Church. It is enough to make even the softest hard consider hardening.

The tendency is to cry out to the Lord, “How long?!” We are crying to you, “Violence!” but you do not intervene! But in the midst of these present calamities comes a clear message from the Sacred Scriptures, “The Word of the Lord remains forever!” The psalm sings clearly to us, “If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.” The Lord is asking us to live by faith in Him and not in the machinations of the world. And we have many a motivation to do so.

We as Catholic Christians have the promise of the Holy Spirit on our side. We have the promise that the gates of hell will not prevail against the Bride of Christ, the Church. We have the deposit of faith that has been entrusted to the Church and held firmly for two millennia. History tells us this is most likely **not** the worst time the Church has ever faced. We weathered the fall of the Roman Empire and survived. We suffered heresy and moral degradation even among the clergy and popes in the first millennium and God raised up champions and reformers who put us back on solid footing. We have the bold witness of the



martyrs and the sound teaching of the confessors and the prayerful aid of the saintly religious men and women in the Church Triumphant. Why are we afraid?

It is because we have little understanding of God's ways. We have little faith. All we need is faith the size of a mustard seed, and the Church would be resplendent and beautiful. But we have become too accustomed to our present comforts. We are too attached to worldly pleasure, honors and privileges. We are afraid to be bold in our proclamation of the Gospel and instead we make many an excuse for the flesh. We accommodate rather than accompany. We rashly abandon the path of salvation and the saving teaching that comes from God in order to placate those in error or ignorant of the truth. This has to stop. "The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live." There will be no healing, no reconciliation, and no lasting peace unless we live in accord with God's will. We have to stop thinking like man does and put on the mind of Christ. When it comes to evangelization of the Amazon, of Rome, and of our own hearts, we have to trust in the supernatural power of the unadulterated Catholic faith. We are not called to be successful; we are called to be faithful. When it comes to confronting the moral relativism of Pride Parades, we must first look at ourselves and ask, "Have I been kind? Have I loved the sinner rather than willing his destruction? Have I prepared to repay insults with blessing, to bless and not to curse? When it comes to the national crises of leadership, have I prayed for those in power? Have I asked the Lord's blessing on my nation, or have I simply caved into negativity and character assassinations? Have I truly participated in the life of society, acknowledging what is good and promoting peace and reconciliation even among those with whom I disagree?"

Listen to St. Paul as he urges Timothy to "stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands." The laying on of hands is a sacramental action. This is in reference to his ordination which is accomplished by the laying on of hands and the invocation of the Holy Spirit. The same thing happens in the Sacraments of Baptism and Confirmation when the priest or bishop laid hands on your head and asked the Holy Spirit to come down upon you. And so, in the face of so many challenges to faith in our day, St. Paul's words of exhortation can be directed to us also! Stir into flame the gift of God that you have through the work of the Church! He did not give us a spirit of cowardice but of power, love and self-control! Do not be ashamed of your witness to the Lord Jesus. Now is the time to make the sign of the cross in public, to bless your food at restaurants. Pray the Rosary on the street corners. God does not desire the death of sinners; neither should you! God desires that all men be saved, and He asks your voice and your witness to accomplish His will. Don't be afraid of telling the Good News that we have a God who is merciful to those who repent. Sing from the rooftops - and by our actions, online presence, personal encounters, intimate conversations, and moments of truth - that God loves us! God wills our eternal happiness. The path to this happiness is found in the Catholic faith. The Catholic faith is not a shameful thing. We don't hate. It is the devil's work to make it seem that way. The Catholic Christian is meant to be a light in the darkness. Let's do an examination of conscience to see if we are burning with the flame of God's love, or if there is some other motivation like hatred, greed, or envy that is casting a false light. We are called to be as passionately in love with the world as our God is. But we love in truth. And the truth is that the world has walked away from God. Not every desire that comes from the heart of man is good. The Good News of Jesus Christ is that His way is the way of salvation. So, let us be servants of the truth and of the Christ. We are unprofitable servants merely doing what we are obliged to do. Ours is to be faithful, not necessarily successful. When people walk away or seem to be deaf, don't become embittered or resort to name calling, carping or back-biting. Say, rather, "As for me and my house, we will serve the Lord." Do not be afraid to have faith that if we follow His



way, even though the darkness gets darker and the persecution gets stronger, He will make all things new- even this broken and bruised world that is so tattered and worn. “Come, let us sing joyfully to the **LORD**; let us acclaim the **Rock** of our salvation. Let us come into his presence with thanksgiving; let us joyfully sing psalms to him. Come, let us bow down in worship; let us kneel before the **LORD** who made us. For he is our God, and we are the people he shepherds, the flock he guides.”