

# Go Forth...

A SERVICE OF U.S. CATHOLIC MISSION ASSOCIATION

## MISSIONARY COMMENTARY

# GENERATOR OR TRIPLE A BATTERY?

### SUNDAY READINGS:

HABAKKUK 1:2-3; 2:2-4

PSALM 95:1-2, 6-9

2 TIMOTHY 1:6-8, 13-14

LUKE 17:5-10



Faith, hope and love: the three greatest virtues. We can see glimpses of these three virtues in this Sunday's readings, but clearly the virtue of faith is most predominant. The faith spoken of here is not a list of beliefs or doctrines, but an attitude which permeates one's life, attitudes, decisions and relationships with God, with others and with oneself. Having faith is not a magical formula, an

abracadabra, that we say to eliminate all the darkness in our lives. It is a power, sometimes great like a generator that can light up a huge house during a tornado. Sometimes it is a triple A battery that gets the small jobs done to perfection. Faith is like a fire. It can be a huge bonfire celebrating the coming together of family and friends; or a soft smelling candle that unites one with God or a loved one.

I remember many examples of faith that I saw in my Brazilian friends during my mission years there. The second Sunday in October, which is next Sunday, the Cirio dedicated to Our Lady of Nazareth will be celebrated. It is a four to six hour procession going from the Cathedral in the city of Belem, Para to the Basilica of Our Lady of Nazareth at the other end of the city in honor of Our Lady. (You can watch it on the internet. Brazil is 2 hours ahead of us.) Millions of people come from Brazil and many other countries to show their faith in Mary's power which leads us to Jesus. Many carry items that symbolize a grace earned, a petition made, but always based on love and faith.

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One year a man was seen carrying a small refrigerator on a wooden slab on his head in the procession. When asked why, he replied: "I just opened a small store and I promised Mary that I would carry the first item that I sold in her procession, as a sign of my faith in her intercession. I did not sell a blender, nor an iron, nor a fan. I sold a refrigerator, so that is what I carry today!" He did explain that he had removed the motor to lessen the weight! The Brazilian culture is not like ours, but this man's faith was expressed in a concrete way that perhaps you don't understand. I was impressed with him. That my faith be less abstract and more concrete as his was.

I cannot close this reflection without commenting about the great need for faith, hope and love in our country and in the world. Do feelings of despair creep up into your being sometimes, like they do in me? Do you pray the words of 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". My faith returns to me after the tears and cries and then I continue joyfully believing in the God of love. We need each other to strengthen this faith, so please, join with your faith community, with family and friends and let us love and pray with faith. God is among us and everything happens according to God's time.

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## NOTES ON THE SUNDAY READINGS:

**First Reading – Habakkuk 1:2-3; 2:2-4:** The reading reveals the intensely disturbed people who feel that they cannot count on God. The violence is just too great. God, however, reminds them of their mission: to write down God's vision clearly so that all will understand and believe again in God's time. With faith all will believe and see the divine promise come true.

**Responsorial Psalm – Psalm 95: 1-2, 6-9:** The community is being called to rejoice and acclaim the God who is our Rock of salvation. As a people united in faith and in the certainty that God is our God, we believe that our salvation is also a certainty. But if we waiver, if our hearts become hardened, then we run the risk of abandoning our God and not living as God wants us to live.

**Second Reading – 2 Timothy 1:6-8, 13-14:** Such a short reading this is, but yet how powerful. St. Paul must have been encouraging Timothy for the trials and tribulations that Timothy would confront someday. We, too, should embrace this reading with the same purpose. The power of the Holy Spirit that we received at our Confirmation is our strength today, especially as we confront our world so broken, so violent, so far from the Gospel values that Jesus taught.

**Gospel – Luke 17:5-10:** Jesus begins this teaching with the strength of the virtue of faith. True faith can even make nature obey our command! Imagine that. But as Jesus goes further to explain, this kind of faith is the result of being a servant. We should not be looking to do magical works. We need to serve God's people. We need to listen to those who have no one to whom they can speak. We need to share our lives with the abandoned and neglected. After all, isn't this the mission that Jesus left with us? When we live the Gospel, we are not extraordinary people, but we are simply the servants of our loving God and nothing more.

Notes and Commentary by Sr. Nancy Schramm, OSF. Sr. Nancy is a past-president of the USCMA and currently serves in a small rural parish. She also serves her religious community on various committees. She is a spiritual director and translates for other groups in Portuguese.

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