

Ordinary 27C 2013
Complaining to God in Faith
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Have you ever complained to God? Have you ever wondered if God hears and answers your prayer? Have you ever argued with God? If you have, then you are in good company. You are in the company of the Psalmist who laments, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me?” You are in the company of Job who complains that God has unfairly punished him. You are in the company of Jeremiah who complained that God tricked and deceived him. You are in the company of the prophet Habakkuk who surveyed the destruction and violence that afflicted the Holy City of Jerusalem, and cried out, “How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen! I cry to you ‘Violence’” but you do not intervene.”

Complaining to God is not a bad thing. It can even be a form of prayer if done in faith. For example, Jesus’ last words were the words of Psalm 22, “My God, My God, why have you forsaken me.” Although he trusted and believed that God would save him, Jesus experienced the absence of God’s presence at the moment of his death. And so, like the Psalmist, he cried out and complained, “why have you forsaken me?”

As a priest, I have listened to the cries and anguish of many people, especially at times of tragedy, sickness, and death. I have heard people complain, “Why has God done this to me? Why has God allowed this? Where is God?” At such moments, I cannot give them the answer they want. I cannot give them an answer that I myself believe. But at such moment I do tell people that it is not wrong to complain to God. It is not wrong to complain *if we make our complaint with faith.*

This is why God tells the prophet Habakkuk to wait with faith: “Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets so that one can read it readily. If it delays, wait for it, and it will surely come, it will not be late. The rash one has no integrity; but the just one, because of his faith, shall live.” God assures Habakkuk that he will answer his complaint. God assures the prophet that he will not abandon him. But Habakkuk must wait in faith; he must wait in trusting faith for God to fulfill his word.

Saint Paul says something similar when he tells Timothy to stir into a flame the gift that was given him when he was called to preach the gospel. And Jesus

tells his disciples that if they had faith the size of a mustard seed, they could say to the mulberry tree, “be uprooted and planted in the sea,” and it would obey them.

Faith is complete and utter trust in God when we no longer experience God’s presence. Faith is complete and utter trust in God when there is no earthly reason to believe. Faith is complete and utter trust in God, even when we are angry with God.

Jesus had such faith, and it was this faith that allowed him to heal the sick and cast out demons. St. Paul had such faith, and it was this faith that allowed him to preach the gospel in a hostile and unwelcoming world. The prophet Habakkuk had such faith and it was this faith that allowed him to wait for the vision even though it did not come as quickly as he hoped. And we manifest such faith, if we trust and rely on God in bad times as well as good, in sorrow as well as joy, in sickness as well as health.

So complain to God. Complain to God every day without guilt. Bring your cares and sorrows to God. Be angry with God, if you must, but in your anger believe and trust in the goodness and care of God.

In a few moments we will baptize two infants, Lexi Taylor Kopel and Michael Francis Furey. By their baptism they will enter into the mystery of Christ’s death and resurrection; they will enter into the life of faith that sustains and nourishes us. Pray for these children and their families that they will grow ever deeper into the faith they receive today.