

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Oct. 5 & 6, 2013

All Saints Church
Kathy Osbelt, OSF

Move Mountains, Uproot Trees!

In a Broadway Production of the play “1776”, John Adams, the central figure, is attempting to get the 2nd Continental Congress in Philadelphia to act decisively and declare independence from England. Some members of Congress were slow to change. Representatives lacked imagination. Some were even self-serving. Adams, seeing the issue clearly, struggles to gather support. No colonies ever before broke away from their “mother country.” It is the hour to seize independence. To pass the Declaration of Independence written by Thomas Jefferson of Virginia, there had to be a unanimous vote. All 13 had to say yes. Emergency dispatch came from George Washington, Chief of the Continental Forces in NY. “The British have landed with 25,000 troops. Action must be taken!” It was July 3, 1776. The Congressional Hall is empty except for John Adams. He paces back and forth. “Is anybody there? Does anybody care! Does anybody see what I see?”

Habakkuk would have liked John Adams. Habakkuk cries out: “O Lord, how long shall I cry for help and you will not listen?” He dares to question, to even yell at God. We may have spoken something similar when we hear of news like: over 100 dead in the mall in Kenya, 130 dead in All Saints Church in Peshawar, India; a shooting spree in a Colorado movie theater and in a school in New Town, Connecticut. More at the naval Yard in DC. Before that, the Amish Community, Columbine, Selma, Kent State, Vietnam, 2 innocent senior citizens on the streets of Syracuse. These are just a few of some exposed times and places of violence and destruction. We see and hear this news every day. It’s enough to make you question your faith.

Habakkuk yells at God: “If you want me to believe in You, You want me to have faith in You, why do You make me look at all this? Why don’t You do something?” We aren’t too removed from our ancient brother. We ask why does injustice and violence seem to prevail.

God does answer Habakkuk. He tells him not to be afraid. Then he orders Habakkuk to write down the vision. Write it big!! Put it on a billboard on 690! Let everyone see it! There is still a vision. Wait for it. It will surely come.

God is faithful to us. God does hear the cries of God’s people. God has saved us many times over. We must remember the promises of God and keep faith.

If I may quote from Pope Francis' interview: 'The image of the church I like is that of the holy, faithful people of God....The church is the people of God on journey through history, with joys and sorrows....I see the sanctity of God's people, the daily sanctity. There is a 'holy middle class,' which we can all be part of. I see the holiness in the patience of the people of God: a woman who is raising children, a man who works to bring home the bread, the sick, and the elderly priests who have so many wounds but have a smile on their faces because they served the Lord, the sisters who work hard and live a hidden sanctity. This is for me the common sanctity. I associate sanctity with patience, a constancy going forward, day by day.'

Centuries after Habakkuk, Jesus' disciples come with the same question, surrounded as they were by a disastrous world in which they lived – an army occupation; oppression; violence; many, many poor begging in the streets; government scandals. They themselves already had fights about who is at the top, who will sit on Jesus' left and right, who is best. So they said:

“A vision, give us a vision”;
Faith, we need faith;
Hope, give us home;
Light, let us see;
Increase our faith.

How often do we ask for that faith...for that hope...for that vision?

Sometimes we do ask, and yet sometimes WE are blocking that vision and that faith. Sometimes WE are the reason it comes slowly.

Because in that vision we might see how WE as a people are the cause of those disasters, injustices, violence and oppression. Maybe our complacency slows down the vision. We ask for faith but we refuse to really believe. Are we willing to settle for less?

Jesus speaks: Even if your faith would be like a mustard seed, so small, you would be able to move the world, the mountains would slide over and trees would come out.

Challenges...yes. But we can surmount them.

We can sit and moan at the base of the mountain, or move it!

We can complain about the trees in the way, or we can uproot them!

So look inside and see what your obstacles are to move mountains for those around us and to uproot the trees in the way. We need to say that prayer: Lord, increase our faith!!! We are the keepers of the “common sanctity” that our Pope spoke of. So believing in that faith, being faithful to that sanctity: let us move mountains as a community. First of all, let us be people of prayer. It eh Pope can take an hour a day,

Bishop Desmond Tutu, one week's retreat every month, then we can spend at least 20 minutes in prayer every day, just talking to God as to a friend.

Then let us move out from there in faith, to move mountains through the RCIA Program or another aspect of our Faith Formation. Perhaps it's for the liturgy or as an altar server we are called.

Maybe we can give some time to those who are bereaved or sick in our All Saints Family. Yours might be the energy that is needed on the peace and Justice Committee or the Alliance Community Transforming Syracuse. There are women in our parish who are on fire, sharing their faith in our women's ministries. We have had great regard for those who are disabled. Our parish, each of you, has been generous to our ministry in Nicaragua and Kenya. We thank those who are involved in parish governance, weekend hospitality, and with our garden. There are so many opportunities for each of us to grow, for each of us to stretch, for each of us to join the gang that's ready to move the mountains, the parishioners who are ready to uproot trees! And by the way, Jesus said at the end of today's Gospel: "When you have done all you have been commanded to do, say, 'We are simple workers. We have done no more than our duty.'

So, Church, let us claim the faith that Jesus is offering us. Let us multiply our efforts together because God has answered our cries, has given us the vision and the faith to make it happen.