

- Paul reminds Timothy in our second reading today of: “*the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands...*”...the gift of ordination, which made Timothy the bishop of his local church.
 - It is amazing to think that this “chain” of bishops and ordination stretches back all the way to the apostles themselves...and even back to the Last Supper, to Jesus Himself, as its origin in grace.
 - This “imposition of” or “laying on” of hands for ordination continues to our own day. At ordination of deacons, priests and bishops, the bishop/bishops will lay hands upon the head of him to be ordained in order to impart that sacrament of Holy Orders...the gift of the Holy Spirit...an assignment of service, and not of an expectation of honor and worldly privilege...though it certainly is a privilege to serve God and His people.
 - But, as St. Paul says about his own assignment of mission: “*...if I preach the gospel, that gives me no ground for boasting. For necessity is laid upon me...I am entrusted with a commission...*” (1Corinthians 9:16-17 RSV) An obligation. A duty.
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 - Yet this duty and obligation is laid upon all of Christ’s disciples in one degree or another, through baptism and confirmation...
 - ...and thus our Gospel reading of today becomes one of the most re-orienting Gospel passages of all...reminding us that we are truly servants of the Lord...obliged by our very existence to God’s service...and, in accord with His Word and His will, obliged to the service of our fellow Man.
 - This is no affront or indignity, but rather a real joy for us, and the very source of our true honor...for we serve the Almighty God, the very author of Goodness itself...and thus we ought not recoil at service, but rather rejoice in the privilege given us...one that so many in the world have not explicitly been entrusted with...or that many—tragically—have specifically rejected.
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- However, many persons in our day want to view God...our Father... our very Creator...more as a contemporary or an equal rather than as the all-loving, all-knowing...and all-powerful... divinity which He is...
- ...and, thus, some seem to think that God “owes” them something, not remembering that our very existence comes from, and is dependent upon, Him.
- “I can make my way without God!” Really? Take away what God has made, and there is literally nothing. No thing...no existence whatever...or, rather, nothing other than God alone, who IS existence itself...the one self-existent Being.
- So...to think that God “owes” us anything can be likened to a child who, although clothed, fed, sheltered, educated, protected, and whose very existence comes through his parents, protests his independence from them...now, and even before his conception and birth. We immediately see how ludicrous that idea is.
- And so, again, St. Paul’s verse: *“What have you that you did not receive? If then you received it, why do you boast as if it were not a gift?”* (1Co 4:7 RSV)...
- ...and we remember the book of Sirach: *“Remember that through your parents you were born; and what can you give back to them that equals their gift to you?”* (Sirach 7:28 RSV) How much more, then, do we owe thanks and reverence to God...who gives existence to all things.

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- If you’ve not reach 2 Maccabees, pick it up sometime, as it has wonderful stories of faith.
 - I always love the story of the mother and her seven sons her were being martyred for refusing to deny their faith...and she says to them:

- *“I do not know how you came into being in my womb. It was not I who gave you life and breath, nor I who set in order the elements within each of you. Therefore the Creator of the world, who shaped the beginning of man and devised the origin of all things, will in his mercy give life and breath back to you again, since you now forget yourselves for the sake of his laws.”* (2 Maccabees 7:22-23 RSV)
- And, as her youngest son is about to be killed, he is promised riches and fame if only he will recant his faith, but his mother says to him:
- *“I beseech you, my child, to look at the heaven and the earth and see everything that is in them, and recognize that God did not make them out of things that existed. Thus also mankind comes into being...[and so] prove worthy of your brothers. Accept death, so that in God's mercy I may get you back again with your brothers.”* [And] the young man said [to the tyrant], *“What are you waiting for? I will not obey the king's command, but I obey the command of the law [of God] that was given to our fathers...”* (2 Maccabees 7:27-36RSV)
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- How much more so should we—who have the fullness of God’s grace in the Word and salvation of Jesus Christ so generously offered to us—be faithful to Him who gives us all good things...our very lives.
- ...remembering, as Paul writes: *“We know that in everything God works for good with those who love him...He who did not spare his own Son but gave him up for us all, will he not also give us all things with him?”* (Romans 8:28-32 RSV)
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- Ingratitude, or perhaps the failure to have gratitude toward God, reminds us of Job, who complained of his life because he was

suffering many things...but God reminds him: “*Where were you when I laid the foundation of the earth?*” (Job 38:4 RSV)...implying those words of Isaiah: “*...as the heavens are higher than the earth, so are my ways higher than your ways and my thoughts than your thoughts.*” (Isaiah 55:8-9 RSV)

- In other words, “Your created, human understanding is so limited; I know and understand all.”
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- And this touches upon intellectual arrogance in our modern day... that “I know best”...even better than God!
- But can the house know more than the builder...or can the painting know more than the artist? The most brilliant, the strongest, the most capable ant is still an ant...still incapable of exceeding the ability of an ant...
- ...so how can we know what is best—and what is best for us—more than He is the author of Good, and who created us...for “*In the beginning, God created the heavens and the earth.*” (Genesis 1:1)
- ...and, as for ourselves, as we hear in Psalm 139: “*You formed my inmost being; you knit me in my mother's womb. I will give thanks to Thee, for I am fearfully and wonderfully made; Wonderful are Thy works...*” (Psalm 139:13-14)...
- ...and as far as Man’s “wisdom”: “*He who teaches men knowledge, the LORD, knows the thoughts of man, that they are but a breath.*” (Psalm 94:10-11 RSV)
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- Yes...as Jesus says today: “*When you have done all you have been commanded, say, ‘We are unprofitable servants; we have done what we were obliged to do’*”

- ...and yet, even though all that we have...all that we are...we owe to God, Jesus also assures us elsewhere: “*Blessed are those servants whom the master finds awake when he comes; truly, I say to you, he will gird himself and have them sit at table, and he will come and serve them.*” (Luke 12:37 RSV)
- Could there be any more comforting...could there be anything more thrilling...than hearing from His throne on that great day: “*Well done, good and faithful servant; come and share your Master’s joy.*”

Reading 1

[Hab 1:2-3; 2:2-4](#)

How long, O LORD? I cry for help
but you do not listen!
I cry out to you, "Violence!"
but you do not intervene.
Why do you let me see ruin;
why must I look at misery?
Destruction and violence are before me;
there is strife, and clamorous discord.
Then the LORD answered me and said:
Write down the vision clearly upon the tablets,
so that one can read it readily.
For the vision still has its time,
presses on to fulfillment, and will not disappoint;
if it delays, wait for it,
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.

[Ps 95:1-2, 6-7, 8-9](#)

Responsorial Psalm

R. (8) If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

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.

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

Oh, that today you would hear his voice:
"Harden not your hearts as at Meribah,
as in the day of Massah in the desert,

Where your fathers tempted me;
they tested me though they had seen my works."

R. If today you hear his voice, harden not your hearts.

[2 Tm 1:6-8, 13-14](#)

Reading 2

Beloved:

I remind you, to stir into flame
the gift of God that you have through the imposition of my hands.

For God did not give us a spirit of cowardice
but rather of power and love and self-control.

So do not be ashamed of your testimony to our Lord,

nor of me, a prisoner for his sake;
but bear your share of hardship for the gospel
with the strength that comes from God.

Take as your norm the sound words that you heard from me,
in the faith and love that are in Christ Jesus.

Guard this rich trust with the help of the Holy Spirit
that dwells within us.

[Lk 17:5-10](#)

Gospel

The apostles said to the Lord, "Increase our faith."

The Lord replied,

"If you have faith the size of a mustard seed,
you would say to this mulberry tree,

'Be uprooted and planted in the sea,' and it would obey you.

"Who among you would say to your servant
who has just come in from plowing or tending sheep in the field,
'Come here immediately and take your place at table'?

Would he not rather say to him,

'Prepare something for me to eat.

Put on your apron and wait on me while I eat and drink.

You may eat and drink when I am finished'?

Is he grateful to that servant because he did what was commanded?

So should it be with you.

When you have done all you have been commanded,

say, 'We are unprofitable servants;

we have done what we were obliged to do.'"