

HABAKKUK

The Man: Little is known about Habakkuk; he may have been a member of the Temple choir. The book opens with a dialogue in which the prophet questions God's ways, reflecting his struggle with the problem of evil. It dates between 605 and 597 B.C., shortly after Nahum.

The Times: The Babylonians had defeated the Assyrians and the Egyptian Pharaoh; they would soon invade Judah and lay siege to Jerusalem.

The Message: The Lord will use Babylon as the punishing instrument for his people, but he will save them from total destruction.

Prophetic Themes in Habakkuk

Authority: the Lord said ...: [2:2-3]

Covenant Relationship: the eternal God is in charge: [1:12]

Specific Sins: bloodshed and violence, idolatry: [2:6b-10,12-13,15,19-18]

Judgment: the Lord will use the Chaldeans (Babylonians) to punish His people: [2:8,16-17; 3:3,5-6,12-14]

Remnant: God will save a remnant of His people: [3:13,18-19]

Readings at Mass

1:2-3; 2:2-4 – The prophet's complaint and the Lord's response [Year C, 27th Sun. in Ordinary Time]

1:12-2:4 – Why do you allow the wicked to oppress the just? The just man shall live. [Sat. of the 18th Week in Ordinary Time, Year II]

Habakkuk's message resonates in our time – see the parallels in these passages:

Then the Lord answered ...: "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." [2:2-3]

"For all those whose cares have been our concern, the work goes on, the cause endures, the hope still lives, and the dream shall never die." -- Sen. Ted Kennedy, NYC, 1980 Democratic National Convention