

[If you are worshipping with us this weekend because of our observance of a blue mass, if you serve or have served in law enforcement, emergency response, or any area of public safety and health, would you please stand? Thank you for your service.] [This weekend we are honoring those who serve or have served in law enforcement, emergency response, and areas of public safety and health.] We chose this date because this past week we observed the feast of the archangels Michael, Gabriel and Raphael. These messengers of God also secured safety and protection for God's chosen ones. In our tradition, they are patrons of those who work in similar fields. We may complain about a speeding ticket, a noisy siren, or a traffic jam, but we are all grateful to those who protect the laws of our society, and who rescue us from illness, accident or disaster.

In most emergencies, before first responders ever have a chance to hear our plea for help, we have already sought assistance from a higher power. We ask God for rescue. It has always been this way. At the time of the prophet Habakkuk, for example, people were in trouble. The prophecy we hear today sounds disturbingly contemporary. Imagine a violent city street. You step outside your house and someone shoots you in the foot to steal the laptop out of your hands. You stand on the corner not far from a church and someone you know unexpectedly shoots you. (Both these incidents happened in Kansas City last week.) Or you live in parts of Jerusalem where sectarian violence arises at any time. Or you live in a war zone in Iraq or Afghanistan, and the sound of bullets shatters the nighttime silence. Imagine you live in a place like that, and listen again to Habakkuk's lament: "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." Even if you don't live in a war zone, you have probably known times when your life was in danger, or when your comfortable world teetered on emotional collapse. If so, you know the feeling of this prophecy.

God responds to Habakkuk with words both comforting and frustrating. There is a vision for a better world, a world of peace and trust. That's the comforting part. But that vision has not yet been fulfilled. God's message is, "Don't give up on it. Wait for it. I admit this vision is hard to see sometimes, so here's a piece of advice. Write it down. Write down the vision clearly, so you can read it when times are tough." The Lord says, "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." Many people think that the vision of peace is plenty late already, that God should be implementing a better world now. But God says the vision has its time, and it is not late. It is coming, and that is enough. While it is coming, we rely on other sources for support – especially the people who serve our society and families in our times of greatest need. Each one of them is a sign to us that the vision has not been lost. You can read it; it is written on the faces of those who put their lives at risk in order to save yours.