

Sunday February 13, 2022

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Parishioner Reflection

By: Jim McDonald

Today's readings are all about trust in the Lord and it is fitting that these readings follow last Sunday's Gospel in which Jesus calls Simon, a poor fisherman, to follow him.

In the first reading, the Lord says, "Cursed is the one who trusts in mere mortals". They rely on their own strength, their own understanding or that of others to be their guide and source of worldly success. But this is futile and leads away from the Lord.

In contrast, the one who trusts in the Lord, whose trust is the Lord, "He is like a tree planted by water, sending out its roots by the stream, and does not fear when heat comes, for its leaves remain green, and is not anxious in the year of drought, for it does not cease to bear fruit." When we trust in the Lord, we know that whatever we encounter in life, in good times and in difficult times, God is with us.

All of us, at times, are like the one who trusts in mere mortals and that mortal is typically ourselves. This is no surprise since this is what we were taught and what continues to be taught in our schools and in our culture today. There may be events in our lives, in our families, at work, in our community, in our country or in the world, that make us fearful. We are called to put aside fear and to trust in the Lord, knowing that he will give us the grace we need. And this grace becomes a light for others.

Our society today looks to governments for progress and solutions to global crises. And so it should, but trust in God is often not in the equation. When we place our trust in the Lord, we know that despite difficulties, the Lord is with us. See Mark 4:35-41, where Jesus calms the storm in the sea. Difficulties may not disappear, but He gives us the grace to persevere in faith and live each moment in His presence. This is a message that is sorely needed today, especially among our youth, who are growing up in a world that is very different from what any of us has experienced before.

The Psalm for today – the very first Psalm! – sings of the importance of trust in the Lord. This truth has also been announced in our own time by Jesus Christ himself through St. Faustina in the message of the Divine Mercy, "Jesus, I trust in you".

Our Blessed Lady and St. Joseph are models of trust in the Lord. The life of the Holy Family was not spared great difficulties, danger and hardship. With faith and trust in the Lord, Mary and Joseph met each day with thanksgiving, knowing that God was their guide. They may not have known where the Lord was leading them precisely, but they trusted completely in His providence

and love. They remained open to God's love and guidance through prayer and listening to Him in sacred scripture.

In his first letter to the Corinthians, St. Paul addresses those in the community who did not believe in the resurrection of the dead. If there is no resurrection of the dead, then Jesus has not been raised from the dead. If Jesus has not been raised from the dead, where is the Ascension, where is the Descent of the Holy Spirit, where is the Church? Indeed, what could have motivated and empowered a few simple fishermen to go out into the world and proclaim this message with such power? It is God's grace given to these fishermen who acknowledged their sinfulness before the Lord. They trusted and so they received the grace to proclaim Christ's resurrection to the world. As Jesus said, "Blessed are those who have not seen and yet believe" (John 20:29). "He is like a tree planted by streams of water, which yields its fruit in its season, and its leaves do not wither." (Psalm 1:3)

In today's Gospel reading, Jesus blesses the poor "for yours is the Kingdom of God", the hungry "for you will be filled", those who mourn "for you will laugh" and those who are persecuted for their faith in him "for surely your reward is great in heaven". These are the people who seek God's help in their weakness and distress. Jesus did not leave the crowd with material blessings, but something far more valuable, faith and trust in him with which to meet the challenges of the day, confident that they are not alone and will be rewarded. They went home, their lives were changed and they became witnesses of the Lord's love and mercy.

In contrast, those who are rich, who are full now, who laugh now refers to those who see no need to turn to Jesus for help and award their "success" to their own abilities apart from God. "They set their mouths against the heavens, and their tongue struts through the earth." (Psalm 73:9) "And they say, 'How can God know? Is there knowledge in the Most High?'" (Psalm 73:11)

The message in today's readings is very clear; trust in the Lord and He will give us the grace to love and share his love with those around us.