

Anyone who might be a regular reader of these homilies for the Children's Liturgy of the Word at Our Lady of Lourdes may remember that last week I mentioned that it was six weeks since Christmas and there were ten weeks remaining until Easter. That would mean that this week we are seven weeks since Christmas with only nine weeks until Easter. Okay. In the year 2022, that would make today the Sixth Sunday in Ordinary time. And if it weren't the third year in COVID19 time, we might be in the same room, and I might ask the group, "What is Ordinary Time?" Since every week we discuss that Ordinary Time is any Sunday in the liturgical year which is not during the Seasons of Advent, Christmas, Lent, or Easter (or any other feast day), then I would expect everyone to know the answer to that question.

What makes Ordinary Time Sundays special (like all Sundays are special) is we read in the Bible about the different experiences Jesus had during His time on earth and the different lessons He wants us *still* to learn from His interactions with the people of the time. What do we know about the people who followed Jesus while He was on this earth? Well, they were poor people, often hungry, often sad, ruled by the Romans, who hated them and treated them poorly, especially if they were followers of Jesus. So these people didn't have a lot to be happy about in this world.

When I was young, the Church had what was called the Baltimore Catechism, which explained in a series of questions and answers all that Catholics were supposed to believe. Religion class back then often consisted of learning the answers to the catechism questions. I'll always remember the first two questions. The teacher would ask, "Who made you?" And the answer was and still is, of course, "God made me." Then the second question was, "Why did God make you?" And the answer was, "God made me to know Him, to love Him, and to serve Him in this world, and to be happy with Him in heaven." Did you notice that as Christians we do

not believe we are supposed to be happy in this world? Oh sure, it's great when things are going well. But when they don't go well, that doesn't mean that God doesn't love you. No one ever promised us happiness while we are here. Even the Declaration of Independence doesn't say we have the right to be happy, just the right to pursue happiness. It's the same with your parents. You know how sad you are when they tell you no TV, video, or internet or any other playing until you do your homework or your other chores, like taking care of your pets or practicing your piano or cleaning your room or whatever. That doesn't mean that they don't love you. These are just things you have to do. So when life isn't just the way we want it on this here earth, how do we get through the suffering or unpleasantness?

Well, that brings us to the first reading today, from Jeremiah, who was a prophet. "What is a prophet?" is kind of like "What is Ordinary Time?" Almost every week we cover these two topics., which means I guess we want you to know the answer to these two questions. Prophets have the gift of hearing God's word so they can speak it to His people, including us through the bible. Jeremiah spoke God's words to the people of Israel. Jeremiah tried to call the people back to God's ways, but they didn't listen to him. He was often discouraged or sad because they wouldn't listen to him. He was ignored, laughed at, and poorly treated, just because he was doing what God wanted him to do. But he was loyal to God and faithful to his mission to spread God's word. Even though the people didn't want to hear it, Jeremiah knew that real happiness comes to the person who *trusts* in God and His word. Today's first reading has Jeremiah describing a happy person using the *metaphor* of a tree by a stream.

A reading from the book of the prophet Jeremiah (Jeremiah 17:7-8).

The Lord blesses everyone who trusts Him. They are like trees growing beside a stream, trees with roots that reach down to the water and have leaves that are always green. They always bear

fruit, and they don't worry about lack of rain during the dry season. The word of the Lord.

There's a word. *Metaphor*. Suppose you said "I'm so hungry I could eat a horse." What might that mean? Well, a horse is big. If you're hungry, do you really want to eat a horse? Probably not. But if you try to eat a pile of food as big as a horse, you'd be eating a lot of food. The metaphor of a big horse helps to explain that you're so hungry you could eat a big pile of food. So when Jeremiah says that everyone who trusts in the Lord is "like trees growing beside a stream," the metaphor is the tree growing beside the stream. So, do you *trust* in God? Of course you do. I hope you do. Are you a tree by a stream? Of course not. But Jeremiah says you are like a tree by a stream. A stream always has water in it, even if it hasn't rained for a while. What does the tree need to survive? It needs water. So regardless of the weather, the tree by the stream always has water from the moist ground, so its "leaves...are always green [and the tree can] always bear fruit." If you *trust* in God, it doesn't matter what is going on around you, you are always blessed by the Lord.

There's another word. *Trust*. Trust means to rely upon, to count on. When you are home, you trust that your parents will take care of your needs. You rely on them to make sure you have food to eat, clothes to wear, and heat to keep you warm. When you are walking home on a cold day, you have *hope* that you will get warm when you get home, because you *trust* in your parents. There's yet another word. *Hope*. Hope is an expectation or a wish for something, which is usually good, to specifically happen.

Next is the psalm for today, Psalm #40, a psalm about *hope*.

Responsorial Psalm (Psalm 40:1-2, 3, 17).

Happy are they who *hope* in the Lord.

Happy are they who hope in the Lord.

I patiently waited, Lord, for You to hear my prayer. You listened, and You let me stand on a rock with my feet firm.

Happy are they who hope in the Lord.

You gave me a new song, a song of praise to You. Many will see this, and they will honor and trust You, the Lord God.

Happy are they who hope in the Lord.

I am poor and needy, but, Lord God, You care about me, and You come to my rescue. Please hurry and help.

Happy are they who hope in the Lord.

After a psalm about hope, today's second reading from St. Paul to a group of people called the Corinthians also mentions hope.

A reading from the first letter of Paul to the Corinthians (1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20):

Sisters and brothers: If we preach that *Christ* was raised from death, how can some of you say that the dead will not be raised to life? If the dead will not be raised to life, then Christ was not raised to life (because He was dead). Unless Christ was raised to life, your faith was useless, and you are still living in your sins. And those people who died after putting their faith in Him are completely lost. If our hope in Christ is good only for this life, we are worse off than anyone else. But Christ *has* been raised to life! And He makes us certain that others will be raised to life also. The word of the Lord.

So St. Paul tells us that “[i]f our *hope* in Christ is good only for this life, we are worse off than anyone else.” But since Christ was raised to life, others will also be raised, others like you and me. We’re the others who will be raised to life, not in this world, but in the next one, in heaven...if we *trust* in Jesus.

In today’s gospel, St. Luke tells us about a famous and important sermon Jesus gave to the people.

Alleluia, Alleluia. *Alleluia, Alleluia.*

Rejoice and be glad; your reward will be great in heaven.

Alleluia, Alleluia.

A reading from the holy gospel according to Luke (Luke 6:17, 20-23).

Jesus and his apostles went down from the mountain and came to some flat, level ground. Many other disciples were there to meet Him. Large crowds of people from all over Judea, Jerusalem, and the coastal cities of Tyre and Sidon were there too. Jesus looked at His disciples and said: “God will bless you people who are poor. His kingdom belongs to you! God will bless you people who are hungry. You will have plenty to eat! God will bless you people who are crying. You will laugh! God will bless you people when others hate you and won’t have anything to do with you. God will bless you when people insult you and say cruel things about you, all because you are a follower of the Son of Man! Long ago your own people did these same things to the prophets.” (Remember Jeremiah.) Jesus continued, “So when this happens to you, be happy and jump for joy! You will have a great reward in heaven.” The gospel of the Lord.

So Jesus comes down from the mountain and looks out on all of his followers, so many of whom were poor, and hungry, and sad, and hated for following Him or being Jews, and he saw the people's problems as difficult to deal with. He didn't want them to be dejected or disappointed with their miserable lives here on earth. So what did He tell them? He told them that God was going to bless them in heaven after they suffered here on earth. Are you poor now? Jesus says that you'll have God's kingdom in heaven. Are you hungry now? Jesus says you will have plenty for you to eat in heaven. (You'll even be able to eat a horse, if you're hungry enough.) Are you sad now? You're going to laugh when you get to heaven. Are people mean to you now? Just you wait. Because your reward will be great when you get to heaven. We just said that in the Alleluia verse before the gospel, remember? "Rejoice and be glad; your reward will be great in heaven." No matter how bad it gets here on earth, all you have to do is *trust* in God, which means also to follow Him, and your reward will be great in heaven.

And that, girls and boys, is the lesson in today's readings.

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Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, 2022