

February 14, 2010

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

First Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Second Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Gospel Reading: Luke 6:17, 20-26

Homilist: Deacon Joe Milligan

One of the most devastating emotions to experience in life is that of rejection, being told to 'go away', 'leave us alone', and 'you're not wanted'. Both Jeremiah and Jesus experienced rejection in their lives not once or twice but time and time again.

As we heard in today's first reading Jeremiah was directing the people not to put their trust in the world of human affairs, not to look and trust in things of the flesh for if they did they would be cursed. He told them to put their faith in God, to let God be their hope, their source of strength and nourishment. If they did they would be blessed.

If we continue to read through the book of Jeremiah we see that the people continually ignored, abused and rejected Jeremiah choosing instead worldly wisdom. As we see, they wound up being defeated, exiled, and placed in bondage by the Babylonians.

Then in today's gospel we see Jesus addressing His disciples and others telling them not to be concerned with their circumstances that ultimately their good fortune consists in receiving the blessings in God's kingdom. Jesus is also warning those who have much that placing their confidence in the transitory things of this world makes a disciple unfit for God's kingdom.

Luke's gospel was not condemning any particular social class, pitting the rich against the poor, but is indicating the need to recognize that all things, even life itself, is a gift from God and the absolute need for us to rely solely on God, not on self.

The call of Jesus to turn from sinful and evil ways was largely rejected by the religious leaders and the civil authorities and at times even by His own family. He experienced the ultimate rejections when, being innocent of any wrongdoing, He was put to death on a cross. But, as the radio commentator Paul Harvey would say, that's not the end of the story. Jesus, who lived His life preaching and teaching God's love caring compassion, having had complete faith and trust in His Father arose from the dead. Christ has died, Christ is risen, Christ will come again.

Jesus, after rising from the dead, appeared to His followers, those who believed that He was the Messiah. He then commissioned them to go forth and preach the Good News of God's kingdom, to preach about Jesus risen, about a God, a Father who wants all people to come to Him. Those followers of Jesus went time and again abused, ridiculed and rejected but they knew that this life was merely transitory and that by choosing to follow Jesus and trusting in God they would experience a richness and a

happiness and be filled with joy forever in the fullness of God's kingdom.

The message from these scriptures for each of us who have accepted Jesus Christ through our baptism as our Lord and Savior is for us to recognize the authentic demands of living a Christian life. Living an authentic Christian life will, at times, be counter-cultural and at times we, too, could experience abuse and ridicule and rejection for often God's ways and the ways of the world clash. Just look at the violence and morality exhibited in our society and entertainment venues. There are many other volatile issues that we're daily confronted with; the horror of abortion, greed, abuse of power, constant health-care issues, immigration concerns, the death penalty, euthanasia and war.

The catechism of the Catholic Church reminds us that the compassion for the poor includes mental, physical and spiritual and is not simply an extra responsibility undertaken by the heroic but is an intrical aspect of the commitment to Jesus Christ that's pledged by all Christians through our baptismal vows and, as followers of Jesus. We

are called by God to live a life of love, care and compassion for all people and to realize that social justice and love are not separate categories

The woes that we heard in today's gospel are not intended to be curses but a wake-up call. To follow Christ means that God needs to be number one in our life and to recognize that all that we have, including our own life, comes from God and that only God can fully satisfy the longing in our hearts for peace and happiness.

The blessings announced today tell us, in no uncertain terms, that God holds close to those who are poor, hungry, grieving and hated and that as His followers we are to do the same. Our God is an inclusive God. God rejects no one who calls out to Him in their need.

As we continue on our own faith journey we need to trust in Christ, to recognize that the Holy Spirit will empower us giving us courage, patience, strength and wisdom. Now is the time to live the gospel message, not next month or next year for only in Jesus will we experience peace and find true joy.