

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Faith, Hope, Trust
February 17, 2019
Fr. Max Oliva, S.J.

There are two parts to my Homily today: Part One refers to the First Reading, the Psalm and the Second Reading; Part Two refers to the Gospel.

PART ONE

First, from the prophet Jeremiah where his emphasis is on the virtue of trust. "Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord. He/she will flourish even in times of distress." And from the Psalm, "Blessed is the one who delights in the law of the Lord. He/she is like a tree planted near running water that yields its fruit in due season.

First, there is faith.
Then, there is hope.
And finally, trust.

Trust involves surrender, a letting go of control, and 'falling into the loving arms of God.' Allow me to share two examples from my life. As I do so, think about the role of trust in yours.

The first example: My mother was diagnosed with cancer at the age of 44. I was 18, my sisters were 11, 9, 4, and my brother 1. During the two years that she fought the disease before it took her life, she had a favorite spiritual book that she read sections of everyday. The book is called, "Abandonment to Divine Providence"; the author, a 17th century Jesuit by the name of Jean Pierre De Caussade. What she learned from this book was how to trust in God's Providence; trust that God would take care of my Dad and their children. This she was able to do. She died peacefully.

The second example: As part of our Jesuit training, a few years after Ordination, we do a third year of novitiate. It's called, "Tertianship." This year has different phases: A second 30 day retreat, the first one done in the Novitiate; classes to refresh us on the history of the Jesuits and our Constitutions; and some ministry intended to 'stretch' our mind and heart. I chose to travel to India and work with the Brothers of the Missionaries of Charity (founded by Mother Teresa) with the destitute people of Calcutta.

I had one big fear about going to Calcutta. As an extrovert, I process things by talking with someone. However, where I would be staying the community

were all young Indian men. On the third day after I arrived in the country, at Mass – celebrated by the General Superior of the Brothers, Brother Andrew who was visiting for a few days- the Gospel was the miracle of the multiplication of the loaves and fish. Brother Andrew pointed out that after everyone was fed, there was bread and fish left over. “What this says to me,” he shared, “is that God provides not only what we need but more than we need.” Upon hearing this I made a decision to trust that God would provide for me what I would need – people to talk with about what I would be experiencing during my 3 months in Calcutta and even more than I would need. And that is exactly what happened.

PART TWO

In the Gospel we heard Luke’s version of the Beatitudes. His are very different than Matthew’s, for example, the first Beatitude in Matthew is “Blessed are the poor in spirit.” Luke has, “Blessed are the poor.” Blessed are the poor, the hungry, those who are weeping, those who are hated for following Jesus, and so forth. Scripture scholar Roland Faley writes: “the economically poor were central to Jesus’ ministry – the downtrodden, and “sinners” in the eyes of the Pharisees.

Luke also adds “Woes” to Jesus’ message. Woes to those who have but don’t share.

“Luke confronts his readers,” Theologian Michael Simone tells us, “with the passing character of human social hierarchies.” Those who have wealth, power, success can be saved if they share. The late Jesuit Walter Burghardt puts it in a unique way:

“Blessed, happy, fortunate are you who are rich, rich in money or power, in talent and time, because you can do so much for those who are poor. But blessed only if you have the mind of the poor, the mind of Christ...Only if you realize that you are stewards, that whatever you “own” you hold in trust.”

CONCLUDING PRAYER

Lord, you invite us to put our trust in You, not in the passing things of life. Help us to be blessed – right in the eyes of the Father. We give thanks to you for the graces You have given to us through the Holy Spirit. May we follow your example In all we think and do.

AMEN

Fr. Max Oliva, S.J. February 17, 2019