

6th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Cycle C

Happy Valentine's Day. In honor of Valentine's Day, I would like to begin with a Valentine story. Back in 1920, a man from Bavaria, Germany, placed this ad in the newspaper:

Middle-ranking civil servant, single, Catholic, 43, immaculate past, from the country, is looking for a good Catholic, pure girl who can cook well, tackle all household chores, with a talent for sewing and homemaking with a view to marriage as soon as possible. Fortune desirable but not a precondition.

A woman named Maria Peintner answered the ad. She was 36 years old, a trained cook and the illegitimate daughter of a baker. She did not have a fortune, but even so, they married four months later. In spite of their somewhat advanced years, they had three children - two boys and a girl. The youngest child received the same name as his father: Joseph Ratzinger. He is better known today as Pope Benedict XVI.

Pope Benedict wrote his first encyclical, *Deus Caritas Est*, on love. In the encyclical the pope gives a winsome presentation on the meaning of love. But in the end he admits that love is not so much a lesson to be learned as a mystery to live or, another way of expressing this idea is, ***Love - rooted in faith - is not so much taught as caught.***

Because of faith, we know there is more to life than the sum of our circumstances. The word beatitude literally means *happiness* or *blessedness*. Jesus' way of happiness, however, demands a transformation from within -- a conversion of heart and mind which can only come about through the gift of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus is not saying that it is “always bad” to be rich. He is simply observing what the acquisition of riches has done to the wealthy people of his own generation, and also to previous generations. Elsewhere he will talk about the

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difficulty of such people getting into the kingdom of heaven, like a camel trying to squeeze through the eye of a needle.

In the First Reading (Jer 17:5-8), God's prophet reveals the hearts of the selfish rich. They have planted their roots in a barren desert, unable to yield good fruit – another way of saying they are trusting in their riches, and not in their stewardship of the providence of God.

In the Gospel story Jesus had just come down from the mountain where he had spent the night in prayer, and where he had chosen his twelve special disciples. On the plain at the foot of the mountain Jesus found a large crowd of his own followers, but there was assembled also a 'great crowd of people' who had come to hear him and be cured. They had not come to follow him, but they came out of curiosity and in the hope of some profit for themselves.

That same scene applies to each of us today. We need to look at ourselves and see where we stand; to which group do we belong? Have we given up anything in our following where God calls us? Are we prepared to give up anything? Or do we still have a foot in both camps, admiring Jesus, wanting something from Jesus, but desperately hanging on to our securities, and all the things that keep us feeling safe. We **MUST NOT** allow the **POSSESSIONS, POSITION or POWER** we have, to control us or prevent us from using those blessings to help those who are economically or spiritually poor.

What does it mean to "**trust in the Lord**?" Is your interpretation the same as your neighbor's or are either of your interpretations the same as mine? The dictionary defines *trust* as having a firm belief in another's honesty, to rely upon

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someone, to have a confident expectation, to hope, or to care for something. To trust someone is to believe in someone, to have faith and hope in him or her.

The Lord God entrusts our spiritual health to the care of the ministers of the Word of God. He trusted the care and welfare of a country to their leaders; orphans to some parents; the care of the sick and the elderly to caregivers; and the proper treatment and rehabilitation of prisoners to peace officers. He trusted employers with employees to ensure that they will be properly paid for their day's work. Each of these examples, and others, has been entrusted with an abundance of gifts and abilities in accordance with their calling.

What happens when this trust is broken? What happens when the rich ignore the poor or those who are filled refuse to share their food with the hungry; when the famous have become too good for their peers, when they reject their old friends because they are now viewed as being inferior? [Lk. 18:9] What happens to those who embrace this life by partying weekend after weekend, abusing alcohol, drugs, or other vices as the way of life? These are the ones being referred to by the **“Woes”** in the Gospel; woe to them for their way of life will condemn them all! Woe to them for they will have received their consolation.

My brothers and sisters, the Lord God has trusted us with much. We are told in the Parable of the talents [Mt. 25:14-30] that the Lord has given us much and expects us to gain much more from what He has placed in our trust. If we take what the Lord has given us and abuse it, in the end, we will have nothing. If we take what has been given to us in trust, and invest it in our spiritual growth, in shining love towards others, in caring for those in our trust, much more shall be given to us [Mt. 25:21]. This is the spiritual law of Divine justice.

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From the moment of His unrolling the scripture in the synagogue to his unrolling of His life on the cross, Jesus is inviting His followers to reverse their own value-system and assist in the value-rerouting of others. Jesus called Peter out of his boat, and away from the identity by which he was known and knew himself. The question will always be about where are **OUR** roots, what or who tells us who **WE** are, and what are **WE** going to do with it all.

As we approach Lent this week, and during the season of Lent, let us reflect upon what has been placed in our trust; our trust towards the Lord God and others. **For what we do to others, we do to Jesus.** Let us pray for the grace of God to enlighten our minds so we can perceive our human weaknesses. Then, by the power of the Holy Spirit, it shall be said regarding us: "Blessed are those who trusted in the Lord."