

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time



We are likely familiar with the *Sermon on the Mount*—Saint Matthew’s account of Jesus’s inaugural address where he challenges modern ideas of power, success, and lifestyle in order to lay the foundation for his earthly ministry. We may be less familiar with the *Sermon on the Plain*, this Sunday’s Gospel Reading according to Saint Luke:

*Jesus came down with the twelve
and stood on a stretch of level ground
with a great crowd of his disciples
and a large number of the people
from all Judea and Jerusalem
and the coastal region of Tyre and Sidon.*

Luke’s Gospel portrays Jesus as one who appeals to those lower on the social ladder—the poor, the outcasted, the grieving, and the addicted. He approaches the crowd on even ground—meeting them where they are at, just as we do with those seeking recovery. Jesus proclaims:

*Blessed are you who are poor,
for the kingdom of God is yours.
Blessed are you who are now hungry,
for you will be satisfied.
Blessed are you who are now weeping,
for you will laugh.
Blessed are you when people hate you,
and when they exclude and insult you,
and denounce your name as evil
on account of the Son of Man.
Rejoice and leap for joy on that day!"*

In other words, Jesus praises those who admit they are powerless and in need of a savior. Those who seek hope in the Lord—or in the language of the Twelve Steps, those who come to believe that a Power greater than themselves can restore them to sanity—will find a freedom unknown to those who put their trust in their own human power. A similar message is shared by Jeremiah in this Sunday’s First Reading:

*Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings,
who seeks his strength in flesh,
whose heart turns away from the Lord.*

*Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord,
whose hope is the Lord.
He is like a tree planted beside the waters
that stretches out its roots to the stream:
it fears not the heat when it comes;
its leaves stay green;
in the year of drought it shows no distress,
but still bears fruit.*

When we put our faith in the Lord, our recovery bears rich fruit and offers freedom from the shackles of addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments. This is a dramatic change from the pursuit of power, pleasure, honor, and wealth which is at the heart of self-centered addiction. As we engage in spiritual progress, we get the opportunity to shed whatever stands in the way of our call as Christians. Through humble prayer, we ask God for knowledge of His will and the power to carry it out.

As Jeremiah notes, we will face inevitable obstacles. If we are still holding firm to our own agenda, the will of God becomes less of a concern in the face of fear and anguish. When our roots are planted near the waters of Christ, we flourish and are given the nourishment to hold fast to what is true.

We speak to one another on equal ground and share the Good News in a way that most people can understand—especially those who have experienced the darkness of addiction and spiritual hunger. As we gather in fellowship, let us meet each other on level ground and freely share our experience, strength, and hope. Therefore, one day at a time, we may experience the kingdom of God.

Reflection Questions

- What helped you come to realize that you are powerless over addictions, compulsions, and unhealthy attachments?
- How has God nourished your pain and hunger?
- What do you hunger for?

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Sunday Mass Readings this Week

1st Reading: Jeremiah 17:5-8

Responsorial Psalm: Psalm 1:1-2, 3, 4, 6

2nd Reading: 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Gospel: Luke 6:17, 20-26