

Twelfth Sunday in Ordinary Time (A) Jun 21, 2020

God hears the cry of the poor! That's what today's **Psalm** tells us. And the **First Reading** says the same thing: "Praise the Lord, for he has rescued the life of the poor from the power of the wicked!"

Jeremiah jubilantly proclaims God's **power and faithfulness**: "But the Lord is with me, like a **mighty champion**," he says, "my persecutors will stumble, they will not triumph."

These are beautiful words. But sometimes do they seem to be **too good to be true**? Does God **really** hear **the cry of the poor**? What about the **115,000 unborn babies** worldwide who will be murdered in their mothers' wombs today? What about the **10 million children worldwide** who are trafficked into **slavery** every year? What about the **119,000 people** in the U.S. who have died from Covid? What about the **countless victims** of natural disasters, war, and poverty? What about the **agonizing** moral and emotional suffering **hidden in our own hearts** and our neighbors'? Is the Lord **really with us**? Is he really a **mighty champion**?

Yes. Yes. Yes.

Not a **sparrow** alights on the ground without the Father's knowledge. **Every hair on every head** is counted. Jesus used those **striking images** so that there would be **absolutely no doubt** left in **our minds**: that **God is watching over** all of us and **guiding the course** of history - **nothing** escapes his **providential care**. And if it ever seems **otherwise**, that's **only** because we are not looking at the **whole story**. **Reality**, Jesus teaches us, includes **eternity**. "Do not be afraid of those who kill the **body** but cannot kill the **soul**." God's Providence is **real**. It will **never** let us down. **Every** evil deed will be set right, and **every** prayer will be answered.

I think one of the great witnesses to the reality of God's providence is when we look at the story of any convert, and there are thousands of people who convert to Catholicism every year. Each one of them has a unique story. And every single story is an advertisement for the reality of God's providence.

Take **Henry**, for example. Henry first encountered Fr. Larry when Fr. Larry checked into the tribal office as the new pastor on the reservation. Henry went ballistic and using almost every name in the book told Fr. Larry why he did not want him here.

Henry went through the whole litany: I have seen what your people have done to my people, what you have done to our culture, what you have done to our customs, how you have placed us in square houses on reservations. I do not want you here, I do not want to see you. This went on every time they crossed paths for 17 years. Henry made it very well known that he did not like anything about Fr. Larry. Fr. Larry for his part, never lost sight of why he was there. He never lost sight of God's providence.

One night at his residence, a knock on his door revealed a young man who said, Father, come quick, Henry wants to see you. Well, Father Larry with much reluctance, followed the young man to Henry's residence and upon arriving found Henry on his death bed.

Henry, the tribal medicine man, said I have seen what you have done for my people these past 17 years, how you have cared for them, loved them, respected them, and honored them. At first, I hated everything you stood for but slowly I have seen how you love your God, trust in him by how you live. **I am dying, would you baptize me.**

God's providence is real. As the Catechism tells us in its very **first** paragraph,

"For this reason, **at every time and in every place**, God **draws close** to man. "He **calls** man to **seek** Him, to **know** Him, to **love** Him with all his strength. "He **calls together all men**, scattered and divided by sin, into the unity of His family, **the Church.**" Nothing escapes God's all-loving, all-powerful providence.

This should be a source of **comfort** for us. So why **isn't** it? **Why do we find** ourselves full of **anxiety, frustration, and sadness** in the face of life's difficulties and challenges? For one simple reason: the truth of God's providence hasn't made its way from our **head** to our **heart**. We believe in God's providence in the **abstract**, but we don't **apply** that belief to the **concrete reality** of our daily lives.

Recently, I heard a very disturbed woman say on national news, "we don't need any more prayer." There is **only one way** to bring this truth of God's providence from the head to the heart: **prayer**. We have to pray **more** and pray **better** - all of us. Prayer has to become as **important** for us as **eating** and **sleeping**. This is **no exaggeration**. All the **saints** say the same thing. "**What matters most** is that you develop your **personal relationship** with God. That relationship is expressed in **prayer**."

You know, **we are not out of the health crisis** gripping parts of our country that is also affecting our community. We are not out of the social crisis that wounds all of us with anger or sadness.

Through all this, we can never forget that we are a **Eucharistic people**. It is **your presence here** in the presence of the altar and the Eucharistic banquet, as participants that affirm your being Eucharistic people. We look forward to the day when all Catholics are able to return to the fullness of the Eucharistic banquet. **Come back to where you are right now. Let us pray for an increase in confidence in our Father's providence.** For Reality includes Eternity. God's Providence is **real**. It will **never** let us down.