

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time 2019

My beloved brothers and sisters, in Luke's Gospel, this is the inaugural address of Jesus, His first teaching, and it is very striking! The topic of His teaching is happiness, (the happiness of the Blessed). The word that is used, is not the usual understanding of what makes for happiness; rather, it is a complete reversal of our normal expectations. The word that He uses means that happiness and peace that can only come from God. The Hebrew word is Shalom!

Jesus is not teaching us that the good things of life are evil- not at all; rather, they cannot fulfill our deepest needs, because God has created us for the Love: first, for the Love of God, and then to love on another. Thus, the good things of this world, while they are gifts of God to us, can never fulfill us, for all of these things are passing away, and can never satisfy our deepest need, which is to be loved and to love in return. Jeremiah tells us in the first reading, that if we put our trust in these things, our lives will wither and dry up, like tumbleweeds in the desert- no roots, no fruits.

Rather, Jesus tells us, that in this world, the path to true happiness is found in our radical poverty before God. What God most desires from us, is to allow Him to be our Father, and when we open up our lives, the doors of our hearts in our radical poverty, He rushes in like an infinite ocean of mercy and love to fill us. Jesus teaches us that we will indeed struggle in this life, we will meet hardship and challenges, persecution and sometimes, great difficulties in this life, for they are the result of the fall of man and our own personal sinfulness. On the other hand, Jesus teaches us that the one dependable thing in this life and the next, is our friendship with God and His absolute love for us! He is teaching us, through the prophet Jeremiah, that we must root our lives in the rich soil of knowing, loving and serving Him, and in the life-giving waters of the Spirit. When we do this, we will indeed flourish and bear fruit.

My brothers and sisters, I have to re-learn this lesson, again and again, and so must we all! Because of our fallen human nature, we are always tempted to seek the passing things of this world to fill-up the fundamental loneliness that is in our hearts, which can only be filled with God! St. Augustine taught: "My heart is

restless of God, until it rests in you!” So: this confronts us with a fundamental choice: do we trust and hope in the Teaching of Jesus and the promise of fulfillment in His Kingdom; or, are we living our lives as if only this world can bring us happiness?