

## **Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2007**

One day a man reflecting on the life of priests and its austerity made this remark: "There must be eternal life so that these guys may lead this kind of life; otherwise it makes no sense to live as they do if there is no life after this".

As a matter of fact, the question of after-life is one of the most crucial of the Christian faith. It raises the issue of the resurrection of the dead and that of the relevance of Christian practice: Why are we doing what we do now if there is no hope of survival after this life? Why do we practice charity and obey God's commandments, if nothing exists after this life?

For St Paul, if Christ has not risen from the dead, our faith has no foundation at all. Moreover, we are not only the most pitiable of all the peoples on earth, but also all those who have died in Christ are lost forever. And yet, Christ is raised from the dead as the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. Like a first fruit that gives the taste and the quality of all the fruits that are on a tree, Jesus' resurrection is the measure of what we hope for in the life after death.

The result of such reasoning is quite simple: we will rise with Christ. Therefore, what we do now, in this world, is like a gestation and preparation for the life of the world to come. Not that the present world and its reality lose their importance, but they have to be considered as leading to the fullness of time where the risen Christ has preceded us.

The importance of the resurrection from the dead, and the life of the world to come, helps us understand what is at the stake in the first reading. For Jeremiah, in fact, there are two things before each person, namely the good and the bad, the curse and the blessing. Following the good means putting oneself in a way that leads to blessing, while taking the opposite way leads to malediction.

Whoever puts his trust in human beings alone, and forgets God, is ruining his life, because there is nothing to expect from a mortal being. On the contrary, whoever trusts in the Lord, and bases his life on him, is blessed because God is the source of life everlasting.

That is the reason why the one who trusts in the Lord is like a tree planted near a river that stretches out its roots to the stream. Such a tree does not fear summer, neither the heat nor the drought; its leaves remain green all year long. It bears much fruit, because the stream continually irrigates and nourishes it.

What Jeremiah is telling us in this reading is not that we have to distrust people in our relationships, nor is he teaching us passivity under the pretext that God will resolve all our problems. On the contrary, the prophet intends to make us aware of the fact that given the fragility and the instability of human condition, it is better to found the meaning of our lives on a solid foundation, that is, God. Whoever is with God is never lost, no matter what happens in his life.

To be able to choose God and to put him above anything else is what makes the apostles to be called blessed in today's Gospel. Jesus calls his disciples blessed because they have understood that happiness does not depend necessarily on

material possession, neither on having plenty nor being without problem. But rather, in the way we handle the situations of poverty, famine, suffering and rejection, knowing well that they will not last forever, because God's plan of salvation goes beyond this world.

It is also true that poverty, hunger, mourning or suffering are not in themselves an ideal or promoting situations. They will ever be diminishing conditions that should be changed. However, these diminishing conditions, when lived with God, can pave the way to happiness in the sense that they will not last eternally. God can always change poverty into riches, hunger into satisfaction, weeping into laughing, and suffering into joy. Plus, when in spite of our poverty, hunger, weeping and suffering, we do not reject God, but we engage him in our problems, we put ourselves in the way that leads to his kingdom.

If the others are called cursed, it is because they have not understood and evaluated the importance of God for their lives, in the present, and the place of eternal salvation, in the future. They have made wrong choices. As God does not count at all for them, they reason as though their present riches, joy and fortune are determining conditions for everlasting happiness.

In other words, it is not because the others have plenty, are satisfied or joyful, that they are cursed. On the contrary, it is because their situation prevents them to search for God and to give him a place he deserves in their lives. That is why the beatitudes have a double character of appeal and challenge.

First of all, the beatitudes appeal to our humanity so that we change the situation of poverty, hunger and suffering in the world, as an anticipation of God's kingdom on earth. At the same time, the beatitudes are challenging us. In fact, as we walk along the same path as Jesus who was poor, suffering and rejected, he promises us abundant life, but to attain it we have to make some significant changes in our attitudes and behaviors.

Happiness implies that certain desires are being satisfied; and since a human being's desires are never fully satisfied, a happy person trusts, has hope, for more to come. Happiness that is present is beautiful, but always prompts the question: What about tomorrow? Since no person is happy alone, our hope for the present and the future happiness has to do with others who will not disappoint us.

We pray that the Lord comes to our rescue so that in our search of happiness, we do not forget his Father who is the source of true and everlasting happiness. May God help us to use our present situation in the world as preparation for our eternal life! God bless you all.



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