

Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time A2023

I want to start this homily with the words of Proverb 11: 25: “A generous person will prosper; whoever refreshes others will be refreshed (by God).”

What this proverb brings to our life experience is that any act of kindness, compassion or generosity toward our fellow human beings will never remain without recompense. In other words, the kindness of heart and the generosity of hands attract God’s reward on those who practice them. Those who are generous and hospitable please God and he always reward them for their kindness.

The truth of this proverb is evidenced in today’s first reading by the gesture of the barren woman of Shunem who was hospitable to the prophet Elisha. As she welcomed the prophet to her home anytime he was in mission, God rewarded her generosity by giving her a son.

The generous act of God toward the woman of Shunem shows that God is not indifferent to the ways we live and what we do in order to help each other. He is hidden in our brothers and sisters and what we do to alleviate their suffering or their needs touches his heart.

The gesture of giving to others in need does not mean necessary that the giver has plenty. It takes courage, renunciation and generosity to give to others. It is not natural to give away what we possess. Most of the time people invoke their own numerous needs as reason for not giving to others. As we have heard it, many people spontaneously say, “I have already many problems of my own, why shall add more to what I have by worrying about the needs of another.” Thus, they are reluctant to give to others. However, if they dare doing it, God will bless them because there is no act of charity that will remain unrewarded.

Anyway, why shall we help others in their needs or be hospitable to people? According to today’s Gospel, three main reasons impel us to do so. First, there is the willingness to bear the cross.

In fact, by giving to others, it sometimes hurts because we deprive ourselves of something we would have used for ourselves. In that sense, giving away what we possess becomes an acceptance of sacrifice. By giving to others we show our love of Jesus and bear our cross in following him. At the same time, we give a vivid witness that we have heard him speaking to us, we have taken seriously his words and we want to act on them.

In other words, each day, we must take up our cross and follow our Lord. If we do not do so, we fail as disciples. Bearing the cross will always bring some pain and suffering into our lives. Because anytime we cut off anything attractive that keeps us from God, we will suffer and feel pain. This is part of our life as true followers of our Lord on our way to the Father!

Moreover if we join our own pain and suffering to those of our Lord, then we will share in his work of salvation for the world! Thus, paradoxically, we will save our life by losing it for God’s sake instead of losing it because we tried to save it for the wrong reasons

Furthermore, to love our Lord is to love the Father himself. Certainly, love for our mothers and fathers, our brothers and sisters, and our children must always be a very high priority. But they can never be placed above our love for God and our Lord.

The second reason for giving to others lies in the fact that God is hidden in the poor and the needy. So, by giving to others, we give to God who is hidden in them. At the same time, by receiving those poor people in the name of our faith in Jesus, we receive his Father who has blessed us so much by giving us all those things we enjoy in this world. That is why Jesus says “whoever receives you receives me, and whoever receives me receives the one who sent me”.

Moreover, by sharing some of our material possessions with the truly poor of our community and those in need in the world, we make our Lord happy and bring a blessing into the hearts and lives of those needy. As it happens when an act of generosity is accomplished for someone in need, we hear the words like “You made my day”, “What would be of me without your help?” This way, we attract God’s blessing upon us.

The third reason lies in the fact that by giving to others it is Jesus himself we are helping with our material things. But as Jesus is not ungrateful, he will reward us for our acts of charity and hospitality. That is the reason why Jesus says, “Whoever gives only cup of cold water to one of these little ones to drink because the little one is a disciple – amen, I say to you, he will surely not lose his reward”.

For those evident reasons, we should never regret a good deed. Even if people do not show appreciation, we should keep doing good. If we have done something good to someone even if he does not say thank you, we have to be thankful to God. We have done only what our faith in Jesus has compelled us, knowing well that Jesus and the Father will reward us.

Let us pray, then, that God may help us to recognize that all the material things we enjoy in this world had been given to us by him. Let us ask him to touch our hearts and our minds so that we open our hands to the needy without looking at our own needs or counting the cost. God bless you all!

2 Kings 4: 8-11, 14-16a; Romans 6: 3-4, 8-11; Matthew 10: 37-42



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