

## **HOMILY for 6<sup>th</sup> SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C**

When Dan's house burned down, his first phone call was to the guy who had sold him his homeowner's policy. I need a check for the cash value of my house, & I need it as soon as possible," he said firmly.

"I'm afraid it doesn't work that way, sir," explained the insurance agent politely. "See, yours was a replacement policy, which means that we'll be rebuilding the house exactly as it was before."

"I see," said Dan, after a long pause. "In that case, I want to cancel the policy on my wife."

Anyway, we buy insurance policy to protect us and our property in the long run. If we cannot see that long-term value in getting insurance, we would not acquire it. That's how we humans often view everything in this world. It is exactly that long-term value that we should consider when reading this Sunday's Gospel. Otherwise, the Gospel passage would not make any sense. As we just heard in today's Gospel, Jesus seems to bless one group of people & curse another one. He says, "...Blest are the poor... Blest are the hungry... Blest are the weeping... Blest are the persecuted because of the Son of Man...." He continues, "...Woe to you rich... Woe to you who are full... Woe to you who laugh now... Woe to you when all speak well of you...." I don't know if you understand today's Gospel & what I just shared with you or not. Our experience with Jesus in the four Gospels tells us that He might try to defend & help the poor, the hungry, the weeping, & the persecuted. But, He would not condemn the rich or the powerful as long as they don't misuse their gifts & oppress others. Besides, He was supposed to love & care for everyone. We also know that He welcomed & accepted at least one rich & powerful person named Matthew the tax collector to be one of His disciples. So, why do we hear the language of segregation in today's Gospel?

We might think Jesus wants to bless one group of people & curse another one. But, if we look closely at the group of people that Jesus evidently says, "Woe to," we would see that He does not condemn them & wish bad things happen to them. Rather, He simply cautions them & tells them not to rely on things with short-term value. For those things will disappear quickly before they know it. They should search for things with long-term value & put their faith on those instead. That's why He warns the rich & the comfortable not to rely on worldly things. For they will be disappointed in the long run. The same thing goes for people who build their joy & reputation on this earthly life. They will face the same disappointment in the end. Their fleeting joy & glamor will end abruptly without much notice. In case we need some examples in our world to back up Jesus' message in today's Gospel, we can find many of them easily in our society. We've heard one rich or famous person after another who had lots of money & fame, but suddenly he/she went down the wrong path & ended up with nothing. Or, he/she decided to take his/her own life. We all thought that rich or famous person had everything. But, we have found out that his/her fleeting joy & glamor disappeared quickly. It was the danger of that short-term value or instant gratification that Jesus warns us about. So, how can we build our life & happiness on something with long-term value?

We the faithful have figured out that the most long-lasting source of life for us to build on is the Lord. For the Lord has been around since the beginning of Creation & will continue to exist in the future. So, if we construct our life & happiness on the Lord, we will not be

disappointed. Our life & happiness will not be fleeting or disappearing after a short while. Rather, the Lord will help us extend our life & happiness into the eternity. Prophet Jeremiah explains further our current discussion in today's First Reading as the following: "...Cursed is the man who trusts in the human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season... But, blessed is the man 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... nor the drought; it shows no distress but still bears fruit." So, apparently Jeremiah shares the opinion with Jesus about the importance of being connected to the Lord as our true source of life & happiness. In doing so, we will not have any life situation to fear or stress out about. We'll always bear fruit & remain hopeful. Otherwise, we'll be like a barren bush in the desert & sooner or later run dry in tough time.

We've heard loud & clear how to avoid the attitude of the rich & the powerful in this life & stay connected to the Lord as our source of life & hope. For the rich & the powerful assume that they do not need the Lord. But, why does the Lord seem to reach out to the poor & defend the lowly? First of all, the poor & the lowly do not have anyone to be their advocate & stand up for them. The only one they can count on is the Lord. So, naturally they come to the Lord & ask for help & protection. Moreover, the Lord often sides with the underdog like most of us would. That's why it does not surprise us to see our Lord give His blessings to the poor, the hungry, the weeping, & the persecuted. He does not hesitate to stick out His neck for them & make their lives a little easier. He knows that they have suffered enough; & He wants to lift up their spirit a little bit. He is their only hope & their last line of defense against all the evil forces of this world. Without the Lord, they have no one to look out for their interests & wellbeing. They have no other life line to help them & save them except the Lord.

My dear brothers & sisters, the Lord might favor the poor & defend the lowly because they call on Him often. The Lord seems to give the rich a cold shoulder & the powerful lots of humble lessons about real life. But, the truth is that the poor & the lowly come to the Lord often & call on Him for help every chance possible. On the other hand, the rich & the powerful usually rely on themselves & think that they would not need God at all. We sure need God's protection & help in our lives regardless of our financial & social status. By connecting to God, we're like a tree with its roots firmly planted by the fresh steam of water. In spite of any life condition, we'll always be full of life & hope. That is the best insurance policy we can get for ourselves. I suggest that we all should get it!