

HOMILY for 6th SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year C

This Sunday's Gospel says that God has bestowed blessings on the poor & curses on the rich. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

Edith & Norbert had a knock-down, drag-out battle over his inability to earn a better living. She told him that he wasn't forceful enough in asking the boss for a raise.

"Tell him," she yelled, "that you have seven children. You also have a sick mother, you have to sit up many nights, & you have to clean the house because you can't afford a maid."

Several days later, Norbert came home from work, stood before his wife & calmly announced that the boss had fired him. "Why?" asked Edith.

Norbert answered, "He says that I have too many outside activities."

Anyway, I hope that your Super Bowl Team won this past Sunday. Like many of you, I often root for an underdog team/candidate in a competition. For I tend to identify myself with that team/candidate, which usually needs all the help & support of the public in order to succeed. A powerful team/confident candidate does not need our support or someone else's help for that matter. That team/candidate has so much talent & confidence that it could win a competition on its own. In fact, that is how the rich & the powerful would usually feel about their daily lives. They do not have to struggle to make a living every day, or toil through sweat & blood to make ends meet. They do not need to worry about their daily basic necessities or their costs of living for tomorrow. Indeed, they do not even need God or any divine assistance in their lives. That is why we usually do not see the rich & the powerful fall on their knees & call on God for help. They do not even come to Church weekly, or talk to God in prayer daily for their worries and concerns. That is why Jesus sends them these harsh prophesies & warnings in this Sunday's Gospel, "Woe to you rich; for your consolation is now. Woe to you who are full; you shall go hungry. Woe to you who laugh now; you shall weep in your grief. Woe to you when all speak well of you. Their fathers treated the false prophets in just this way." In other words, watch out, you rich & powerful! For God is in charge, not you! For the way you live & treat others will come back & haunt you in the future. That is what Jesus would want to caution the rich & the powerful about.

Meanwhile, Jesus wants to give the poor & the weak these comforting & reassuring words in this Sunday's Gospel, "...Blest are you poor; the reign of God is yours. Blessed are you who hunger; you shall be filled. Blessed are you who are weeping; you shall laugh. Blessed shall you be when people hate you, ostracize you, & insult you as evil because of the Son of Man. Rejoice & exult for your reward shall be great in Heaven." So, Jesus wants the poor to know that they might not have much in this life; but God has blessed them with the whole Kingdom of God. He wants people who feel hungry & dissatisfied to come to Him to find nourishment & fulfillment. He tells people who weep & face sorrow that He will help wipe their tears & bring them joy in the future. He reminds people who suffer for His sake that He would reward them abundantly in Heaven. Jesus basically wants the poor, the hungry, the sorrowful, & the faithful to remember that they might have some disadvantages in this life. But, they will always have God on their side. God will defend them & fulfill what they lack in this life in Heaven. God will not abandon them, or make them fend for themselves. God will give them a helping hand in this life.

However, this is not the first time that God has sided with the poor & the underdog. Throughout our human history, God has always sided with these people & defended them. God had chosen the Israelites, instead of powerful people like the Philistines, the Egyptians, or the Romans to be the people of God. God had picked Moses, David, Mary, & fishermen to carry out God's missions & defended them. In fact, even in our time, God has allowed the Marian apparitions happen to the lowly children instead of the famous & the powerful. We can try to guess on why God has chosen to be on the side of the poor & the underdog, instead of the rich & the powerful. However, the answer is already revealed to us in this Sunday's Gospel. The reason that God has sided with the poor & the underdog is because they need God & come to God for help & protection all the time. On the contrary, the rich & the powerful do not need God or come to God often in their daily lives. That is the answer & the reason for a close relationship/tight bond between God and the poor & the underdog.

We might think that the rich & the powerful are quite smart. That is why they have been blessed with all the wealth & power in this world according to the Gospel of Prosperity & its preachers. Of course, that is a false claim & assumption as I have explained above. On the contrary, the rich & the powerful often view & consider the poor & the underdog to be not smart. But, the truth tells us otherwise. Most of the rich & the powerful have ended up with an unhappy & meaningless life. That is why they have often committed suicide or ended up with a miserable life despite everything they had. To help us see why the poor & the underdog have made a smart choice by coming to God often, this Sunday's First Reading reveals the answer to us as following, "...Cursed is the person who trusts in human beings, who seeks one's strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. This person is like a barren bush in the desert that enjoys no change of season, but stands in a lava waste... But, blessed is the person who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord. This person is like a tree planted besides the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream: It fears not the heat when it comes... In the years of drought, it shows no distress but still bears fruit." Prophet Jeremiah seems to tell us that the rich & the powerful who rely simply on themselves is like a barren bush in the desert without any source of refreshing nourishment. Over time, they will face a terrible curse & lose their livelihood.. On the other hand, the poor & the underdog who always depend on the Lord is like a tree growing besides a refreshing steam of water that fears no drought or stressful time. They will find all kinds of blessings & secured protection from God.

My dear brothers & sisters, the rich & the powerful think that they are on top of the world & do not need the Lord for anything. But, in this Sunday's Readings, Jesus & Prophet Jeremiah warned them to stop being corky because they might face tough time in this life & the next. On the other hand, the poor & the underdog always feel much stress & hardship & have to rely on the Lord for everything in this life. Today, Jesus & Prophet Jeremiah want to let them know that they have done the right thing by connecting to the Lord all the time. For the Lord will protect them & bring them blessings in this life & the next.