

HOMILY for 3rd SUNDAY in ORDINARY TIME – Year A

This Sunday's First & Second Reading tell us about the dreams and hopes of the people of God. Reflecting on that, I'm reminded of this cute story that I'd like to share with you.

An excited woman called her husband at work. "I won the lottery!" she exclaimed. "Pack your clothes, honey!"

"Great!" he replied. "Summer or winter clothes, dear?"

"All of them – I want you out of the house by six!"

Anyway, like that housewife, we all have our own dreams and hopes. Some people dream of a good education and all kinds of prestigious degrees while others would like to get good, high-paying jobs. Some wish to have a loving, peaceful family while others want to possess all sorts of expensive toys such as new-model cars, boats, motorcycles, and high-fashioned outfits. Most of us Christians/Catholics dream to have a happy life on earth and hope to be rewarded with a peaceful, eternal life in Heaven someday.

Like us, the people of God in the Old Testament had their own dreams & hopes after many years of being exiled and undergoing the yoke of slavery by many occupying empires. This Sunday's First Reading tells us about part of their dream & hope as following, "...Anguish had taken wing, dispelled is darkness: for there is no gloom where but now there was distress. The people who walked in darkness have seen a great light; upon those who dwelt in the land of gloom a light has shown. You have brought them abundant joy & great rejoicing. As they rejoice before you as at the harvest, as people make merry when dividing spoils. For the yoke that burdened them, the pole on their shoulder, & the rod of their taskmaster you have smashed, as on the day of Midian." Evidently the people had dreamt to be free from the yoke of slavery & anguish & see a light of hope & joy at the end of their long-dark tunnel of slavery. They wished to return to their homeland & rebuild their new life. Prophet Isaiah just let us have a glimpse of their hope & dream as the Lord had begun to dispel the dark cloud hanging over them & take away their worries & distress. The Lord had smashed the rod of their taskmaster & destroyed the yoke of their occupying empire. Their days of slavery were coming to an end soon.

While the people of God in the Old Testament were dreaming for a life of freedom & peace, this Sunday's Second Reading shares with us Paul's dream & hope for the Corinthian community as following, "...I beg you; brothers & sisters, in the name of our Lord Jesus Christ, to agree is what you say. Let there be no factions; rather, be united in mind & judgment. I have been informed, my brothers & sisters, by certain members of Chloe's household that you are quarreling among yourselves. This is what I mean: One of you will say, 'I belong to Paul;' another, 'I belong to Apollos;' still another, 'Cephas has my allegiance;' & the fourth, 'I belong to Christ.' Has Christ then been divided into parts?" Evidently the Corinthian community was going through an internal fighting & division. Some wanted to side with Paul while others pledged their allegiance to the Apollos. Still, some wished to support Cephas while others claimed to belong to Christ. Paul was concerned about the dividing spirit and various factions within the faith community. He knew that a dividing house would not last long. Sooner or later, members of that household would turn against one another & tear the whole community apart. Everyone would simply look out for one's own benefits & ignore the common good. So, Paul prayed & hoped that the Corinthian community would be united under the Cross of Christ &

put aside any dividing spirit. He dreamt that the spirit of Christian unity would bring everyone together & drive away any selfish, dividing thoughts.

Surely each & every one of us here has our own dreams & hopes. We dream for a happy & peaceful life. We hope to have a good job & a loving family. We wish to establish a just society & build up a world where its members would treat one another with love & respect. We pray for all Christian factions to return to the one true Church & put aside their differences. Those are some of the dreams & hopes that we might have for our lives, our world, & our Church. But, we should not stop there. We should dream & pray for a world much more different than our current one. That way we would help change our current world of hate & violence to the heavenly one of love & peace. Then, we would truly bring the light of Christ to our homes, our Church, & our world while dispelling all the darkness & evil spirits around us. I believe the first step for us to change our current world is to dream & hope for a different one. So, until & unless we dream & hope for the heavenly world of love & peace, we will still be stuck with the current one of hate & violence.

My dear brothers & sisters, what would you dream & hope for your life? How about for our world & our Church? We have learned about a new life & a different world that Prophet Isaiah & the people of God dreamt for after years of slavery & misery. Paul did the same as he hoped for a faith community/Church where its members were not divided & torn into various factions. Perhaps we should imitate Paul & the people of God & learn to dream for a much more different world than our current one. That is the first step for us to begin the transformation of our current world. I hope you would begin to dream & pray for that new world this weekend.