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Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time - 16 February 2025

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16 February 2024

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time

Reflection by Joe Tedesco

Introduction

The temptation to find satisfaction in human accomplishment and material wealth is ever present. Today's readings remind us how blessed is the one who places their trust in the Lord.

Penitential Act

Use one of the *Roman Missal* texts or this optional litany form:

Lord Jesus, you came to draw us into the life of God. Lord, have mercy.

You came so that we can all be truly happy. Christ, have mercy.

You bring us to new life. Lord, have mercy.

Collect

*O God, who teach us that you abide
in hearts that are just and true,
grant that we may be so fashioned by your grace
as to become a dwelling pleasing to you.*

It is not too surprising to find that our prayer first served as a collect for the feast of the Ascension. This original setting brings to the fore the deep biblical resonances that are at the core of the oration. The use of 'abide' is a clear reference back to the Gospel of John (Jn 6:57, Jn 15:5-7), and expresses God's promise to remain in the heart of believers. Abiding in God's love involves keeping the commandments, inclusive of sharing with the poor: 'but if anyone has the world's goods and sees a brother or sister in need, how does God's love abide in that person' (1 Jn 3:17). The language of God's indwelling is taken from St Paul. It designates Christ's presence by faith (Eph 3:17), the presence of the Spirit (Rom 8:8-9), the presence of Christ's word (Col 3:11) and power (2 Cor 12:9). By contrast, without Christ, sin dwells in the inner depths of the human person (Rom 7:17-19). Rather, the people in whom God abides are characterised by hearts that are just and true. Yet their right deeds are only in harmony with God's will on account of the fashioning of divine grace. The prayer exemplifies the community's faith in the power of God's word, which teaches that God will abide and brings this about.

Collect commentary by Gerard Moore: The discussion of the collect, slightly adapted, was composed by me for the Canadian liturgical journal Celebrate! (Novalis Press). My thanks to them for permission to reuse the material.

First Reading

Jeremiah 17:5-8

Trusting in the Lord is like a tree planted near a flowing stream; always close to the source of life. Relying on 'things of the flesh' is like a shrub planted in the wasteland – it is destined for futility.

Responsorial Psalm

Psalm 1:1-4 R Ps 39:5

Happy are they who hope in the Lord.

The opening of the Book of Psalms proclaims the goodness of living in the way of the Lord.

Second Reading

1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20

Paul reminds us of the importance of Christ's resurrection. The Resurrection is not only Christ's glory but is also the forerunner and guarantee of our own resurrection.

Gospel Reading

Luke 6:17, 20-26

The Beatitudes are an invitation to put our own situations in the perspective of the kingdom. True blessedness does not rest in wealth, excess and notoriety. Rather, it is those who struggle now who will receive lasting reward.

Reflection

Luke's version of the Beatitudes, particularly when compared to Matthew's, is often noted for illustrating the particular blessedness of the materially poor and the deprived. It is a peculiar position for the original hearers of Jesus' teaching because being poor and disadvantaged was generally seen as being in a position outside of God's graces – of being notably 'not blessed' as it were.

Then there are the corresponding 'woes' (the Lectionary translation uses the word 'alas'). Contrasting the blessedness of the poor, the hungry and the mourners, those who are rich, filled and laughing are destined for 'the great reversal' as it is often called.

So why is this so? Why are the poor blessed and the rich woeful? Perhaps part of the answer is found in simply reflecting on where we sit in the scheme that Jesus puts forward. For me and many around me who live in relatively affluent suburban

Australian cities, it is the latter group that is our setting. We are not poor, not hungry and generally not living in despondency. So perhaps there is a certain caution to which we should pay attention.

It brings to mind a recent discussion with a fellow theologian. The topic centred around the increasing irreligiosity of our contemporary world – in particular in our context of a typical Australian capital city. Obviously, there are many people of many faiths including in our Catholic tradition who, though they may not actively engage in their faith, still feel at least an affinity and some connection to the faith tradition and, in some way, to God too. It is not as if people who are not regular attenders at church are entirely atheists in the strict definition of the term. Nevertheless, despite many having Catholic or other religious backgrounds, the sense is there is an increasing ambivalence toward God and matters of religion, especially among the young. It generally is not antipathy or some sort of conscious rejection, more like apathy.

It struck us that this might be so in part because we generally have it so good. This might be especially so as my friend and I are often in contact with relatively successful university students. They are relatively well educated and have most of their needs met through their own efforts and those of their parents. Further, our lives are surrounded by wealth and opportunity. Through the internet, the world and its wares are at our fingertips. We can be endlessly entertained, tempted and made to feel important. And all this is near instantaneously available as we carry the required devices with us every day and everywhere we go. It should be noted that not everyone living in affluent and stable places like Australia are 'living the good life'. There is poverty and injustice in our midst no doubt. That much is acknowledged. However, for most of us, we live with a seemingly endless supply of products, entertainment and amusement.

The upshot of our discussion is that this apathy is, at least in part, due to this affluence. The many students who cross my path, many of my friends and family, they simply do not feel the pinch of recognising how precious life is. In short, they can rely on themselves and their immediate surroundings to satisfy their apparent needs. This 'satisfaction' then masks the real and deeper needs that we all have. Needs of the soul, of meaning and of hope only found in God.

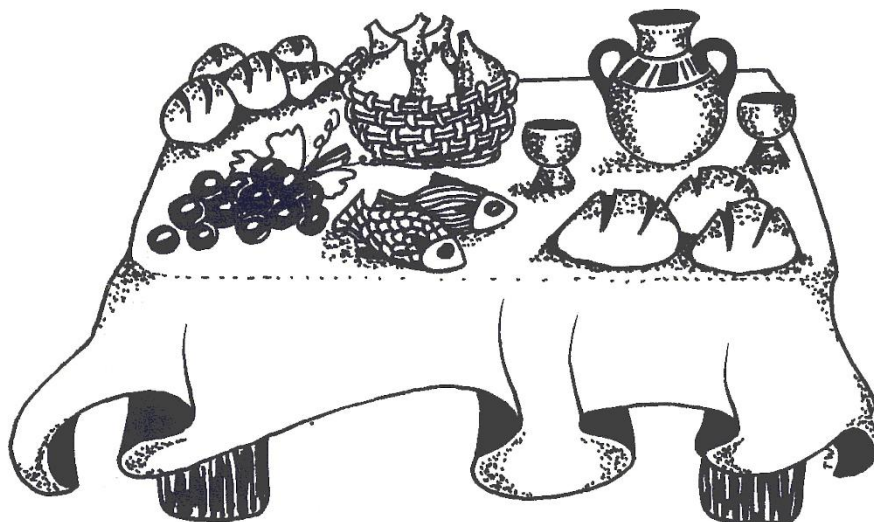
And this seems to be the crux of where the 'woes' and 'blessings' lie. Wealth and comfort are good things in a sense, but they are two-edged. They can create a false sense of comfort and distraction. They can numb us from the inner need, the hunger of the soul and a type of joy only found in God. Further, we can chase such comforts thinking they are the only ends we need.

The first reading spells it out fairly clearly; 'cursed are those who trust in mere mortals, who makes flesh their strength' (Jer 17:5). Such a person who places their trust and strength in human things alone is planting themselves in 'wastelands' – in places that cannot sustain them. They cannot recognise their plight and have 'no eyes' for any true good that can come their way.

In this sense the Beatitudes are a reminder of where blessedness really lies. It cannot come from wealth and power. More likely, those things are going to be impedances rather than doorways to a sacred encounter, distractions creating false points of focus on what truly matters in life. Of course, they need not be. Nevertheless, it is fair to say that today's Gospel reminds those of us living with means and in places of relative wealth and stability that such things can so easily pull us away from the fuller life of blessedness that God would have for us.

It also offers us a reminder of the responsibility we have to take on the mind of Christ and partake in God's special concern for the poor that is so evidenced in such a Gospel reading. Note that such a reading as we have today can lead to a theology of glorifying poverty, as if God somehow wills it. However, that is a misreading. What is expressed in these words sits in a context of a gospel message of liberation and hope that is offered to the poor in the words and actions of Christ.

This, then, gives those of us with means and not in a place of mourning a way to avoid the woes of which Jesus speaks. It lies in shifting our focus to the first set of people in the sermon; the poor, the hungry and the oppressed. More than simply 'giving to the poor', the gospel message is calling us to serve, identify, live and act in solidarity with those who mourn, the poor and the hungry. Noting that sadness, poverty and hunger come in many forms. Jesus is clearly interested in blessing them, and we should be too.



They ate and were filled.

Prayer of the Faithful

Introduction

The psalmist declares that those who hope in the Lord are happy. Let us be happy and place all our needs before God.

Petitions

We pray for Pope Francis and the leaders of the Church that they will always put God's will before the things of this world.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the leaders of Australia that they will recognise that the poor will always be with us and accept the responsibility of providing what is necessary for people to live.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for all those who have begun their academic year. May their efforts and vision bring both students and teachers to a valuable way of living.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for the poor, the hungry and those who weep. May they find hope through the love and care of others who help them.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for this community gathered here that we will always be willing to reach out generously to help others in need and be a place of welcome to all.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

We pray for those who weep and mourn. May they be consoled with the knowledge that their loved ones are with God and that their pain will be eased.

(Pause) Lord hear us OR We pray to the Lord.

Conclusion

God of all goodness, you know our needs and hear our call and we have confidence in your goodness as we make this prayer in Jesus' name and through the power of the Holy Spirit.

Amen.

Music selections by Alessio Loiacono and Chris deSilva

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time, Year C (16 February 2025)

Title	AOV	AOVK	CWB	CWBII	GA
A child's prayer		111			
Amazing grace	29			450	437
Be thou my vision	9			455	
Eye has not seen	146				466
Firmly I believe and truly			677	486	382
Forth in the peace of Christ we go			681	489	495
O breathe on me, O breath of God			758	564	432
O God, our help in ages past	175		767	568	459
Seed, scattered and sown				592	195
Seek, O seek the Lord			802	595	211
The Beatitudes			817	456	489
We are children of the living God		15			
We know that Christ is raised				343	
You walk along our shoreline				653	

Title	S&S1
Lead me, Lord	107
We are the light of the world	143

Psalms Selected by Chris deSilva and Angela McCarthy

Psalm 1: *Happy are they who hope in the Lord.*

	CWB	JOBC	LPC
Psalm 1	366	pg. 64	pg. 98

Music selections by Michael Mangan

Heaven shall be yours (TCS) *Beatitudes* [Communion]