

## The 33rd Sunday in Ordinary Time — December 17, 2019

You may recall on the 13th Sunday in Ordinary Time (June 30th) I invited you to join in a journey with us. The journey was to follow along with Jesus to Jerusalem in Luke's Gospel beginning in chapter 9:51 ..... The bulletin commentary kept up with the journey pretty well and there were indeed many who followed along. It was quite the journey each week watching Jesus effect His ministry along the way, teaching His people, instructing them, healing them, forgiving them, teaching them to forgive one another, and to love and heal one another. The most powerful teaching in the Gospel was laid out.

Our Book Study, *Walking The Disciple's Path*, kept us deeply involved in this same journey. How wonderfully the Study laid out the material of the Gospel, and what it means to be a disciple and to be in a relationship with Jesus. We believe this study was God's gift to us to help us better understand how we grow our relationship with Him. How rich it all has been during those 20 weeks.

This weekend, we have Jesus arriving in Jerusalem ....the last Sunday of Ordinary time ....how nicely it all came together in the Liturgical Calendar. Jesus comes to the Temple area ...He is fully aware that Jerusalem is headed for destruction. He foresaw that the Magnificent Temple would be reduced to a pile of rubble. To the ordinary Jew, it must have seemed impossible, even unthinkable. This was no ordinary building. The Temple symbolized the entire Jewish system of worship. Jesus hears people giving expression to their concerns of how beautiful and wonderful the temple is :

***“While some people were speaking about how the temple was adorned with costly stones and votive offerings...”***

But..... Jesus has bad news for them .....really bad news.

***“All that you see here— the days will come when there will not be left a stone upon another stone that will not be thrown down.”***

Jesus' Prophecy came true, just as He had said it would. Jerusalem was destroyed by the Romans in the year 70 AD after a long siege. A million people were killed or died of starvation during the long siege. The Temple was burned to the ground. Jesus dearly wanted to save Jerusalem, but was unable to do so. On one occasion before this (Luke 13) as He came in sight of the city, with tears in His eyes, He said :

***“Jerusalem Jerusalem ! I longed to gather your children to myself, as a hen gathers her chickens under wings, but you refused.”***

This is so important ....it is key to understanding the Gospel. It is so central to understanding the whole of the Gospel. What Jesus was saying here is an answer to so many of the global questions of our world !

People say just about everyday : ‘Why doesn’t Jesus do this or do that .... Why didn’t Jesus save this child, protect this mother or this father ....why didn't He protect these people from this disaster ? Why did Jesus not prevent this ‘really evil’ person from being born into our world ? Why did Jesus permit death in our world ? The questions are so many !

Reflecting on these types of really difficult questions leads us to the most central question in all of biblical history ! Do you know what that question is ?

Why did Jesus come into our world and exercise His Ministry ? Why did He suffer and die in a shameful death, as a common criminal ? Why did He return to His Father from whom He came and leave us to make our own way ?

The answer is the same as it has always been, and will always be ..... He came to show us the way ....How to live in our relationships with each other and with Him. It is what we learned way back in our Catechism days ..... Remember the Question in the Catechism? ***“Why did God make the World ?***

And the answer was —

***“That we should know love and serve Him here on earth, and be happy with Him forever in Heaven.”***

Now, this may sound a little over-simplistic ..... but, it is still absolutely and abundantly the truth. The difficulties arise because of the premier issue .....it is called **“Free-Will.”** There are certain aspects of “Free-Will” that we especially appreciate, and there are also aspects that we do not agree with or appreciate !

**He gave us ‘Free-will’ to .....know..... love..... and serve Him.**

Nobody has EVER been forced to **Know.... Love.... and Serve Him.** It is always an invitation ..... People have been persecuted for their faith throughout the centuries ..... and others have tried to persuade them ..... Never has it been God !

The consequences of **‘Free-Will’** in our world are enormous :

**War ...Famine..... Fear..... Hatred.... Hunger Envy.....Accidents..... Lying....Cheating..... Pillage....Plunder..... Killing..... lack of Respect, and ultimately, Death itself.**

The consequences of ‘free-will’ are truly immeasurable ! And one of the final consequences is “Blame God” Why doesn’t He do something ? Why doesn’t he stop this nonsense ? This should not come as a surprise to any of us ! We feel the need to blame somebody when things don’t appear to be going our way .....Since God is All-powerful why not blame Him !!!!!

The Truth is :

He has given us Freedom ..... but clearly, we haven't made a great hand of it !!  
He wept for Jerusalem, He so wanted to save it, just as He wants to save each of us ..... He has sent messengers. He came among us Himself to show us the Way.  
He has given us His Spirit to help us make the journey ..... and He has given us the tools. ....But, He has given us Freedom

We, like the Jews, have had many questions about our own Temple over the past few years, and we have had many different perspectives ! All of the perspectives were an attempt to bring into clearer view what He is calling us to do at this point in time.  
For some people, they needed more time to be reflective, more questions answered, more issues addressed .... they are all very important considerations. For some people, they are very attached to this Temple because of the rich history this space has in their personal and family lives. These are very important and valuable issues.  
We very much respect all of these thoughts and sentiments, and we appreciate them.

We asked you to speak to us last week about your intentions, and as to how God is directing us to proceed in terms of our building plans. Since it was the decision of the Building Committee that it was no longer prudent to pursue the option of renovation and expansion of the current sanctuary, we offered you two distinct options, and we asked you to make your intentions known to us. We have not heard from all of our people, in fact there are 75 people who have a pledge commitment to the current campaign whom we have not heard from. A letter has gone out to each of those this week, and we await their response. So, the numbers are incomplete, but we do know you were anxious to hear the results, thus far. This information is available in the bulletin for your perusal.

The following is a summary of the decisions you gave to us :

- 425 People Registered their Decision/Vote
- 333 (78.4%) Voted in favor of #Option 1 ... Build a New Sanctuary.
- 92 (21.6%) Voted in favor of #Option 2..... Just make the necessary repairs on the current building.
- Of the "Yes" responses 38 members who had not previously made a pledge committed to doing so for the building of a new church. A further 21 parishioners committed to increasing their current pledge.
- Of the 92 parishioners who voted #Option 2 ..... 87 voted for the church to retain their donated funds for the repairs to the existing sanctuary, and 5 asked for and received, or are about to receive that refund.

Thank you very much for your responses, for your openness and vulnerability, and for your integrity in putting yourself on the line. Your honesty and generosity are greatly appreciated. As I said, we do not have all of the information in hand, yet.  
So, let us continue our discernment, and our prayer for each other.

— Fr. Gerry Hurley