

# Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time — Feb 17, 2019

Great to be back home again ! It's been a lot of travel .... but all good. I am grateful that Fr. Bernie was able to be here last weekend, (and he had a great preacher along with him .....Thank You, Tony)

The Readings this week-end are a beautiful preparation for the Lenten season which will be upon us shortly ....very quickly. Have you thought about what you might do as something special for yourself during this Lenten Season? Is there something you would specifically like to do for your own personal growth during this Spring-Time? (Lent .... That's what it means .... Spring-Time) A time of pruning and preparing for new growth. As a parish community, we are very excited about focusing on our Small Groups, and we are very pleased by your response. If you have not signed up to participate in a Small Group as of yet, we encourage you to do so before Wednesday so we may find a place for you in one of the groups. Please be in touch with Sarah O'Donnell, or Kelly McBride, they will be glad to assist you.

The text and videos we will be following this season are wonderful. It's called *Respectable Sins*. The subtitle is: *Confronting the Sins We Tolerate*. What a delightful study. Each week of Lent during the homily, we will have a little reflection on the upcoming topic, so that we can all get the full benefit from this study. Our Daily videos throughout the Lenten Season will also be connected to this same theme. The value and importance of being in a Small Group and sharing on this subject is of immeasurable service and value to our parish a whole, and I hope it will also be to each of us as individuals.

The Readings this weekend are a great introduction.

The First Reading ....The prophet Jeremiah presents a contrast between the person who puts their faith in this world, its people, and possessions, and those who put their lives, their faith, and their trust in God. "Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord. He is like a barren bush in the desert....."

While the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is in the Lord .....“He is like a tree planted beside the waters, that stretches out its roots to the

stream: it fears not the heat when it comes; its leaves stay green; in the year of drought it shows no distress, but still bears fruit.”

What delightful imagery. If we are truly connected to our Savior we can withstand the harsh, the trouble, the distress that inevitably visits us in life ..... and most assuredly it will visit us ..... it may visit ourselves or those we love ..... but it will most assuredly visit us. It may come in the form of sickness, distress, anger, resentment, hatred, jealousy, separation, some physical or emotional hardship, addiction, divorce, hunger, poverty, or death itself, but it will visit us !

Having the Lord on our side, or more correctly, if we are on the side of the Lord, we will endure in the face of these difficulties.

I read a marvelous reflection on that idea just this week, in a little book *It's Not Supposed To Be This Way*. The author says, “Disappointment isn’t proof that God is withholding good things from us. Sometimes it’s His way of leading us Home.”

What a wonderful thought ! In other words, beyond our disappointments, God often has a far greater plan for us, and we only experience that plan, that wholeness, when we have moved through and beyond the disappointment of our own plan, our own failures.

That is a great introduction to the Gospel, where we see what appears to be a real paradox, as we initially read the text. We begin reading from ‘The Sermon on the Plain’ and will continue to do so for the next two Sundays. It parallels St. Matthew’s ‘Sermon on the Mount.’ While there are obvious parallels in the teachings of both of these Evangelists, there are also a number of differences ! Matthew has two whole chapters ... Chapter 5-7: Luke has one, chapter 6. Matthew has the Sermon set on The Mount, while Luke has the Sermon after coming down the mountain and settling on the Plain, where, as the Gospel today says, a great crowd of His disciples and a large crowd all gather around Him. We get the clear impression at the outset that this is some really important teaching .....and it most certainly is.

Indeed it would be fair to say that both authors deal a great deal with what we are specifically going to be talking about during this Lenten Season ..... The Respectable Sins ..... The Sins we Tolerate.

Sins such as Pride, Selfishness, Impatience, Irritability, Anger, Anxiety and Frustration, Discontentment, Ungodliness, and Unthankfulness, Judgmentalism, Sins of the tongue. They are all in there in the teaching .....

So, I would like to suggest or recommend for you over the next week or two to take time to read through Matthew Chapter 5-7 and Luke Chapter 6. It provides a marvelous preparation for our study throughout this Lenten Season, and has the power to help us beyond measure in our Study, and in our lives. Even if you are not engaged in a Small Group, I encourage you to read these texts during the Lenten Season. Application of these teachings have the power to radically change my life.

Both authors begin with a version of the teaching that we know as 'The Beatitudes'..... Immediately, we notice a subtle difference ..... Matthew lists 9 Beatitudes..... Luke merely enunciates 4 ..... but, he follows up with 4 Woe's ..... Woe to you who have the benefits now ..... Rich, Filled, Laughing, Spoken well of. These are paralleled with the 4 Beatitudes ..... Poor, Hungry, Weeping, and being hated, despised, or excluded now.

The teaching is a clear declaration that the Economy of God is radically different to the Economy of this world. It is confirming once again for us, that it is very easy to get the Economy of Grace mixed up in our lives. It is not all about being first. In God's Economy, the apparent first will be last and the last will be first ..... yes, it is shocking to realize that, and to try and take that on board ..... But you and I both know very well ..... it is the order of things in the Kingdom. It is the most consistent teaching throughout the Gospel ..... Losing one's life is gaining one's life ..... surrendering as He himself did.

Thus, it makes the 1st Reading from the prophet Jeremiah so relevant today. Don't rely too heavily on your own possessions, on the approval of people, on the joys of life, on getting ahead at the expense of other people. The reversal of fortunes is coming about ..... and now is the appropriate time to make our preparations.

May our Lenten Season be a time of great preparation.

—Fr. Gerry Hurley