

5th Sunday of Lent
April 3, 2022
“Losing Everything”

Is 43:16-21
Phil 3:8-14
Jn 8:1-11

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

The wildfires of the past several years left thousands of people without most of their former life. They lost their homes – and most, if not all, of their personal possessions. Those fires were tragic in their consequences.

However, in the past month, millions have lost their homes and their possessions in Ukraine. And what is particularly tragic is that they are also refugees. They have had to flee their homeland. Now, they must find a new life in a place that is not their own!

We can only have a small idea of what they continue to suffer – That would be if we were to lose everything we possess in a home fire. Yet, we would not be refugees – Because we would still have family and friends to help us in our need.

The Chosen People were not refugees in Babylon. They were captured exiles. They had been forced from their homeland. They had resisted foreign domination and rule in the Promised Land God had given them.

After three generations, they were discouraged and losing any hope of restoration. Consequently, God, through Isaiah, tried to lift up their spirits. He told them not to dwell upon what God had done for their ancestors – or upon what they had lost. There was hope – even in their seemingly hopeless situation in Babylon. God could and would do marvelous, seemingly impossible, things. The symbolism that Isaiah used was the impossibility of turning the desert into a garden place – It was that of wild and untamed animals becoming almost domesticated. With this new hope, they were to look forward to a return and restoration of what they had lost!

In the Gospel of John, the Jewish, political, religious leaders were threatened by Jesus and his teaching. They had power, wealth, and education. But they used the Mosaic Law to bind people with rules and regulations. Thus, they had control and could maintain their sinful lifestyles.

Consequently, they contrived a plan. They set up a woman to be caught in the sin of adultery. (Notice that nothing was said or done about her male counterpart.) Then they brought her before Jesus to trap him in a moral conundrum.

The poor woman was facing death. She was about to lose her life. She would be buried in the ground to her waist – and would be powerless even to raise her arms in defense!

But Jesus ignored them. He refused to be part of their conspiracy. He simply wrote something on the ground. And when they persisted – Jesus told them that the one who was without sin should be the first to cast a stone at her. Again he ignored them and resumed writing on the ground. We are told that they gradually drifted away.

What is wonderful about this story is that the woman was given back all that she had lost. Her life, her dignity, her self-worth, her very soul were restored. She was told to go – and to give up her former life. She was to begin to live a new life – a life without sin!

Today, St. Paul teaches us that nothing that we possess in our life here compares to the life we can have with Jesus and with God. In fact, all too often, our life and our possessions get in the way of our Godlife. They distract us – and they impede us when they involve sin.

What most never realize is that sin is the misuse of something that is good. Sin occurs when we try to fill the emptiness in our heart, soul, and spirit in the wrong way. We turn to what pleasure, power, and wealth can falsely promise. Moreover, sin compounds itself. The more that sin fails to satisfy us, the more we try for greater satisfaction with the next sin and those which follow.

But all sin is empty. It does nothing to fill the void in our hearts, souls, and spirits. Only God can fill this void, because God alone has the infinite love and goodness we all so desperately want and need!

Brothers and Sisters, this is the reason that St. Paul proclaims that he can lose everything – even his earthly life. He has come to know Jesus Christ – and the mercy and salvation that he has won for us. Moreover, although Paul continues to struggle – he does not give up. He is confident of God's on-going forgiveness – and in God's grace to sustain him in the struggle that is our life-journey here!

So, let us pray that we never let the things of this world keep us from God and from what Jesus promises. And may we be willing to lose everything here for what alone can fill our hearts, souls, and spirits!

Amen.

April 3, 2022

Msgr. Russell G. Terra