

18th Ordinary Sunday
August 2, 2020
“Trying Times”

Is 55:1-3

Rom 8:35...39

Mt 14:13-21

My Brothers and Sisters in the Lord –

We certainly live in difficult times – We are afflicted with a virus, the likes of which the world has never seen. The scientists and the people in power often disagree. And some of those in power seem arbitrary in their decision-making – especially the governors of some states.

One thing is for certain – There is no way to escape the virus other than a vaccine. Another unfortunate thing is that all the decision-makers who open and close cities, counties, and whole states, are not affected economically. All the while, millions of others lose their jobs or their small businesses.

Added to this are the political disarray of our country, the hostility between nations, the prospect of nuclear war, and the increasing racial unrest in our cities!

The exiled Chosen People in Babylon had their own desperate problems 3000 years ago. They had to maintain their ethnic identity, their religious and moral practice, and remain faithful to the Lord God. After 2 or 3 generations they had become discouraged. The faithful ones had a hard life and were usually poor – They could barely eke out a living! Those who had sold out – those who had adopted Chaldean culture and worship – often did well socially and materially.

Consequently, through Isaiah, God spoke words of encouragement and hope to the poor. God said not to let the concerns of this world or this life get them down. Even if they had everything they needed and wanted, they would never be satisfied – Because nothing in this world – including the fulfillment of every human desire we can have – will bring us ultimate satisfaction, peace of heart, and permanent happiness.

Only God can absolutely fill us and fulfill us. Because only an infinite God can fill the infinite void within us! God has created us and made us for Himself – and, as Augustine wrote, we are eternally restless until we can rest in Him and be possessed by Him!

In the Gospel selection, Jesus gives us a wonderful example of how we can deal with tragedy as well as with the unfortunate events which continue to beset us at this time. Upon learning of his cousin's, John the Baptist's, death, Jesus withdrew and sailed off to be able to pray in some deserted place. Quiet prayer and reflection can always help us when things go wrong or tragedy happens.

However, the people met Jesus when he disembarked. Their many different needs touched the compassionate heart of Jesus. So Jesus healed and cured all those who sought him out. He touched their troubled hearts with his words. And recognizing their soon-to-be felt hunger, he fed them.

But Jesus did more than feed the 5 thousand men and the 20 or 25 thousand women and children who had assembled. He also taught them the great gift of sharing. In fact, the more they shared, the more they seemed to have – Because God always blesses any generosity we render to those in need!

Finally, St. Paul reminds us that no earthly suffering – or no other-worldly power – can keep God's love from us – or our love from God. This is the message that Jesus, the Son of God, brought to us.

However, we must remain steadfast – We must resist the culture – We must not be taken in by the lies that set up cultural gods – or the shouts that insist that any political party is completely right or completely wrong. We must be patient while the COVID 19 plague runs its course – and do what we can to help others who have lost so much. We must trust and believe that God has a purpose for each of us – and remember that all things work together, somehow, for the good of those who love God and are faithful to Him!

And so, Brothers and Sisters, let us pray that we do not lose heart – And may we, one day, become infinitely fulfilled by the infinite God who calls us beyond this world to Himself!

Amen.

August 2, 2020

Msgr. Russell G. Terra