

Homily July 31, 2022

Today we are continuing on our 10 weeks journey to Jerusalem. At each stop we are learning an important lesson that will help us to grow closer to Jesus. Today is stop six on this journey. We have learned some important lessons up to this point – The power of persistent prayer, having the audacity to be a disciple of Jesus and put ourselves at His feet as Mary did and most importantly to become followers of Jesus – not just admires! Before, I get into today's lesson on the scripture, I want to share something with you. Our God has a sense of humor and ways of revealing things to us if we just take a moment to be silent and listen. But sometimes, like in the case of Saul, He isn't so subtle. Last month when I was ordained a deacon on June 11th, I got the privilege of serving my first mass the next day here at Blessed Seelos. I was so preoccupied with ordination and with all my family coming in, I didn't read in advance the readings for that Sunday. I know, I know, bad Deacon. My wife and daughter were invited to be the two readers for both masses. When my daughter got up to read the 2nd reading, I got the warmest feeling and literally teared up as she read. You see, the verse she read was from Romans, the exact verse that I have read a hundred times, the verse that got me through college and through tough times in my life. The exact verse that when my daughter called

me at the beginning of the Diaconate and asked me what my favorite bible verse was, she hand stamped it out on a leather bookmark for me to use for all my reading assignments. The verse was “We boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us.”

Now today, my first chance to preach a homily on a Sunday, I get the honor of preaching on the hardest lesson that I have had to learn and still struggle with today. Like I said, God has a sense of humor. I prayed hard to the Holy Spirit to give me the words!

Today’s readings not only reveal to us the futility in the acquisition of wealth and power, but also the futility of the anxiety, worry, and despair we experience trying to gain it. But more importantly both these issues can take our sights off God and what He wants for us.

In the first reading from Ecclesiastes, we are told what can happen with the wealth we accumulate. “Here is one who labored with wisdom and knowledge and skill, yet to another who has not labored over it, he must leave property.” And in the Gospel God calls the rich man a fool and says “this night your life will be demanded of you; and all the things you have prepared, to whom will they belong? “Thus, it will be for all

who store up treasure for themselves but are not rich in what matters to God.” We can ponder on who our riches may go to, but the point is you can’t take it with you.

We see in Ecclesiastes about the futility of anxiety, worry, and despair we experience trying to gain material things. “For what profit comes to man from the toil and anxiety of heart which he has labored under the sun? All his days sorrow and grief are his occupation; even at night his mind is not at rest.” This hits home for me in my life and I see it in my children’s lives, and I am guessing it hits home with a lot of us here today. Anxiety and worry over material things can be especially prevalent in times of high gas prices, higher utility bills, higher house notes, and higher costs to put food on the table. It is ok and normal to think about these issues, but not to the point it keeps you from rest, affects your health, or affects your relationships with others and your relationship with God.

So, how do we deal with these issues in a practical way? The answer is simple, we must develop a close and personal relationship with Jesus. When you have a close and personal relationship with someone - you trust them, you confide in them, and you lean on them for help. We need to put Jesus at the center of our lives. When we do this:

- We realize that our possessions are merely lent to us by God, and that we are accountable for their use. Imagine how we can relieve someone else's anxieties if we share what we have.
- Our anxieties over worldly treasures go away because we realize they are fleeting. We then focus all that time and energy we used to worry on what is important - our relationships with our families, friends and our shared paths of salvation through Jesus.
- We do as Saint Paul said in the today's second reading. We begin to think of what is in Heaven and not of what is on earth. We put to death the parts of us that are earthly.

This doesn't mean that all our problems will go away. But when we turn over our problems and anxieties to Jesus and share our afflictions with Him - we can then "boast of our afflictions, knowing that affliction produces endurance, and endurance, proven character, and proven character, hope, and hope does not disappoint, because the love of God has been poured out into our hearts through the holy Spirit that has been given to us." Amen!