

Homily. 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time. Year. C. 12/13 February 2022.

Not from a mountain top as in Matthew's gospel, like a new Moses delivering the new Law of God, but from a piece of level ground on the same level as the people, does Jesus in Luke's gospel give us a simple version of happy blessings and alas-full woes. They are to form our minds and guide our conduct as we follow Him. Their substance is similar to the Matthew's beatitudes, so familiar to us, reduced to 4 essentials which if lived bring sustainable life, but if ignored can only cause grief.

The poor, hungry, sorrowful and those who are persecuted for their faith convictions on account of the Son of Man are happy and blessed, an unexpected upturning of what most people think the order of things is. Moving on, Jesus teaches that the rich, contented, self-satisfied, careless and carefree are headed for a world of woe. They've taken all that they could get for themselves, a way of living can't last. The dry heat of hard times will surely come and then there's nothing left, only the salty parched wasteland where no one lives or cares anymore; dead trees.

Those who are poor, who hunger for what's just and fair, who mourn the wrongs around them and within us all, longing for what is right and honest and people who stand by their faith convictions despite insults and rejection, these are the real happy ones. Their roots go deep, their life-source flows beneath the instant gratification of now, a river running strong no matter the fads, fashions and lies of this time; trees evergreen. Such are the choices we make and the type of person we become. Jesus, speaking face to face with His followers and the large crowd, placed both options starkly before them just as He places them before us.

Every day we make choices about where and how we seek our fulfilment. Is it in the way of the goods and resources of this Earth which are finite as the climate and environmental crisis of our age makes clear? Or is it by the way of faith in God and the good-news of Jesus Christ raised from the dead, the first fruits of all who have fallen asleep, as St. Paul affirms?

Between these paths, so clearly opposed as they are, only we can choose. Surely, as a people of faith we look to what is at the heart of Christ and of our Church, the Eucharist, for our example and encouragement. What we see there, take in and make our own is the selfless giving of our Lord, all for our benefit and never for the satisfaction of his own wishes and well being. This way is sustainable because we have the sustenance of God flowing into us. It's the path, once chosen, that makes us long for the food by which we truly live.

The other way of salt and exhaustion, of the selfish non-stop taking and using of everyone and everything else isn't, as the evidence before us proves each day. Here on the level ground facing the Lord and listening to Him we are asked to renew our choice, so that fashioned by the flood of His grace we can become dwelling places that are pleasing to our God.