

Homily For Tuesday of the 11th Week of Ordinary Time- Year 1

St Peter's 8:30 AM Mass - June 15, 2021

2 Corinthians 8:1-9 "Jesus Christ, though he was rich, for your sakes became poor, so you might be rich."

Psalm 146 "I will praise the Lord as long as I live. The Lord keeps faith forever."

Matthew 5:43-48 "If you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others?"

What's the Good News?

Introduction

There is certainly more than one way to enter into a reflection on the Gospel. One of those ways that is frequently suggested is to begin by asking: What is the Good News here? After all, that is what the word 'Gospel' means. For Christians, we recognize that this Good News is something revealed - that the veil covering it has been pulled off to reveal - the fullness of the love of God, in the person of Jesus Christ. So, when we listen to him, we are not just hearing things that we might consider really great news, but we are listening to the one who IS Good News itself.

Psalm

We also recognize that the Old Testament contains the Good News in a somewhat hidden form. Every person, every event, every prophecy, all point forward to that eventual revelation of the perfection of God's love, mercy, forgiveness and, yes, Good News. It's a pretty radical claim and it does call on faith to see it and accept it and live it out.

Today, the writer of psalm 146 gets to sum up that hidden good news for the entire Old Testament. The reason he will praise the Lord for as long as he lives is that "It is the Lord who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the oppressed." That is, for those who are hated. The psalmist is saying, I will be faithful as long as I live because God is faithful **forever**. It is an exchange we see over and over again. This psalm is fulfilled again even today, when we give our little gifts of bread and wine, symbolizing our lives. God takes these gifts, of which

he has no need, and transforms them into the gift of himself for us, which he returns to us. That's pretty good news because there is no way we could have it if God did not offer it to us.

2 Corinthians

One of the principles of the Good News is that it always asks us if we will respond, not because we have to but because God has poured out grace upon grace into our lives, transforming us into people who are so full of joy that it spills out in generosity.

St. Paul asks the Corinthians to reflect this freely offered gift of God. He wants them to be generous to the poor, especially of the Jewish Christians of Jerusalem. In this way, they show that the Good News of Jesus Christ is for all people, rich or poor, Jew or Gentile, slave or free, woman or man.

Matthew

Today's Good News passage is certainly a challenge, isn't it? We can usually appreciate the idea of being generous for the church and those whom it serves. But, love of enemies is a distinctively hard teaching of Christianity. Nowhere else in the world is this taught. In the world, we know that it is natural to hate those who are hostile towards us. That might even be called common sense. It doesn't take more than a few minutes on social media to see that this is normal behaviour.

But Jesus wants his disciples to live super naturally. To be a disciple is not about memorizing the best sayings of the teacher. A disciple seeks to become like the teacher. In this context, it is not surprising for Jesus to say, "You must be perfect, even as your heavenly Father is perfect." That's the task of the disciple.

The common enemy for the Jesus' hearers was Rome. Loving them was crazy talk. But that is exactly what our forefathers and foremothers in the faith did. And they converted the entire empire. This would not have happened had they formed a guerilla army and carried out attacks. They converted the world, including the most hated, because they loved them. I doubt if Jesus would have a different

message for us today, so it's still our job to love those who persecute us. They are not hard to find.

You Must Be Perfect

St. Augustine thought a lot about God's mercy. He had received it into his own life as Good News. But some people just seemed so despicable, so evil, that he could not understand how God's mercy could be extended to them.

Taking these thoughts a few steps further, Augustine tried to imagine how these people must look to God. So, he carried out a prayer experiment within himself. Paraphrasing him, he says in his reflection: I imagined that Augustine was God and God was Augustine. In his prayer, he attempted to look at those people through God's merciful eyes.

But something very strange happened that he had not expected. His gaze, as God, kept turning upon himself. He began to see himself in all his own sinfulness. Augustine ended his reflection like this: I had to let God be God and Augustine be Augustine. Because, if Augustine was God, he could never forgive the things that Augustine had done in his life.

How often do I do things and say things and think things that I wish I had not done or said or thought? How often am I angry at myself because I have become, in a sense, my own worst enemy? How many times have I done what, if I am honest, someone else would have a right to hate me for?

But in every one of those moments, God offers himself again to us. In every one of those moments, God says: I love you. I forgive you. I would die for you. That's the way God looks at you and me. That's the God we have. That's the Good News. Jesus is asking us again today to be that Good News for others.

Key Scripture Passages

2 Corinthians: *The churches of Macedonia, during a severe ordeal, their abundant joy and their extreme poverty have overflowed in a wealth of generosity. They voluntarily gave even beyond their means, begging us earnestly for the privilege of sharing in this ministry to the saints. Now as you excel in faith, in speech, in knowledge, so we want you to excel also in this generous undertaking. For you know the generous act of our Lord Jesus Christ, that though he was rich, yet for your sakes he became poor, so that by his poverty you might become rich.*

Psalms: *I will praise the Lord as long as I live. It is the Lord who keeps faith forever, who executes justice for the oppressed, who gives food to the hungry.*

Matthew: *Jesus said to his disciples: You have heard that it was said, you shall love your neighbour and hate your enemy. But I say to you, love your enemies and pray for those who persecute you, so that you may be children of your Father in heaven. For if you love those who love you, what reward do you have? And, if you greet only your brothers and sisters, what more are you doing than others? Be perfect, therefore, as your heavenly Father is perfect.*