

Homily For Tuesday of the 6th Week of Ordinary Time - Year 1

St Peter's 8:30/7:00 Masses - February 14, 2023

(Memorial - St Cyril, St Methodius)

Genesis 6:5-8, 7:1-5,10 "The Lord saw the wickedness of humanity and that every inclination was evil."

Psalm 29:1-10 "The Lord sits enthroned over the flood, as king forever."

Mark 8:14-21 "Why do you talk of having no bread? Do you still not understand? Are your hearts hard?"

Bread and Water

Introduction

Poor little Jonny. Jokes and stories about him are always about how not to think and behave. In this one, Jonny's brother has smacked him with a toy and he is doing his best to pay him back, until his mother breaks it up. Later that evening, at prayer time, mom tries to explain the need for forgiveness because Jesus forgives our sins. She says to him, "What if your brother happened to die tonight and you had not forgiven him. How would you feel then?" Well, this made an impression on Jonny so he conceded, "Okay, I'll forgive him now But if he is still alive in the morning, I'm going to get even with him."

There is a kind of hardness in the human heart. Since the fall into disobedience, our ability to see what is evil has been darkened, making us vulnerable to attitudes of revenge, among all the other deadly sins. And even when we do know what is right, our wills, our desire to do what is right, has been weakened.

Genesis

Science has revealed much to us about the natural world which God has made with great beauty and order. And yet, instead of inspiring awe of the God who created them, these discoveries have only raised up a powerful modern skepticism about the things of faith. Floods are a natural phenomenon and nothing more, they say. But without faith in God, there can be no human evolving to a higher level of love.

Genesis tells us how far humans, with loss of faith in God, can go in this direction. The great flood should be a cautionary tale for us. Wickedness dominated. Every

movement of their hearts was towards evil. Except for Noah. Noah lived according to what the Lord commanded. Noah endured ridicule because of this obedience. He foreshadows of the obedience of Jesus Christ who, out of obedience and of love for all humanity, gave himself up to shame and suffering.

When we bless the water of baptism, we make reference to the ways God has used water for cleansing, including the flood, for the washing away of sin. We can well imagine how God is grieved by what has happened to us. This is not about God's emotional state, as if it goes up and down with how we behave. No, this is more about how human disobedience has frustrated God's plan of salvation for all of humanity.

Bread

Jesus himself, in his humanity, manifests the great disappointment of God. Today, Jesus is in a boat with a bunch of little Jonnies. It's funny if you aren't the child in trouble. First they forget the bread. They are like children who have to be reminded to take their lunch to school. And so, like the creator who is upset with his creatures, Jesus scolds and reprimands his children. Watch out! Stay out of traffic. Don't take food from one of those Pharisees. And then all they can think is, boy we are in trouble because we forgot the bread. Jesus then has to have a serious talk with his 'children'. Do you still not perceive or understand?

Mark tells us they had only one loaf. They had one loaf but forgot to bring more? That's not it. The bread they forgot was not from their kitchen pantry at home. It was the seven baskets of miraculous bread left over from feeding four thousand from which they had just come. They forgot the evidence of the miracle of abundance. Mark is right. They had only one loaf of bread. That was the bread of life, Jesus himself, right there in the boat with them. And, even if they don't yet know about the Eucharist, the frustration of Jesus is that their understanding of the meaning of the miracle of bread is weak. How will they ever understand the New Covenant in his body and blood if they don't understand that they can trust him to feed them with ordinary bread?

St Cyril and St Methodius

The saints we honour today nicely connect the early Church and events today. They have to compete with St. Valentine, also a great saint of the early Church, who performed marriages for couples in love, which he did in secret when it was forbidden. But, of course, the brothers Cyril and Methodius are not in conflict with the lifting up of the love of God. They were from Thessalonica. That's where one of the earliest churches was founded. We have Paul's earliest letters, to the Thessalonians, which encourage them to keep the faith when they were losing heart. But these two saints from the 9th century reinforced the Gospel in what we call the Slavic countries. They were in countries where today the faith is very strong, either as Catholics or as Orthodox Christians: Countries like Poland and Hungary and Croatia among others.

We might be interested in the fact that they preached in Ukraine, where there is much beautiful faith. But also, in the same sense that God grieved in Noah's time, it is also a great grief that so many today are suffering because of hardness of the human heart. It would be easy for us to blame a few or even one, but we should not pretend that this is a different problem as in Noah's day and in Jesus' day. It still remains our task to open our eyes and hearts to the love of God. Let the awesome God be seen as joy in us today. Now we have the Eucharist, and we are being asked again today to trust in the covenant relationship with God and to demonstrate our trust to an unbelieving world.

Key Scripture Passages

Entrance Antiphon: *You are just, O Lord, and your judgment is right. Treat your servant in accord with your merciful love.*

Collect: *O God, who enlightened the Slavic peoples through the brothers, Saints Cyril and Methodius, perfect us as a people of one accord in true faith and right confession.*

Genesis: *The Lord saw the wickedness of humanity and that every inclination of their hearts was only evil. And the Lord was sorry that he had made human beings and it grieved him to his heart. So the Lord said: I will blot out from the earth the human beings I have created, people and animals. But Noah found favour in the sight of the Lord: I have seen that you alone are righteous. Take with you seven pairs of all clean animals and a pair of the animals that are not clean. For in seven days I will send rain on the earth for forty days and forty nights. And after seven days the waters of the flood came on the earth.*

Psalms: *Ascribe to the Lord the glory of his name. Worship the Lord in holy splendour. In his temple all say, Glory! The Lord sits enthroned over the flood, as king forever.*

Mark: *After feeding the crowd, Jesus got into the boat with the disciples to return to the other side of the lake. Now the disciples had forgotten to bring bread and had only one loaf. Jesus cautioned them: Beware of the yeast of the Pharisees and of Herod. They said to one another, it is because we have no bread. Jesus said to them: Why are you talking about having no bread? Do you still not understand? Are your hearts hardened. When I broke the five loaves for five thousand, how many baskets did you collect? They said: Twelve. And the seven for the four thousand? They said: Seven. Jesus said: Do you not yet understand?*