

Sixth Sunday of Ordinary Time  
February 14, 2010  
Deacon Tom Barford

Today we celebrate the 6<sup>th</sup> Sunday in Ordinary Time. It is the last Sunday before Lent, which begins this Wednesday, Ash Wednesday.

Our message today can be summed up in a single word: **trust**, or to be more specific, **trust in the Lord**.

In our first reading from Jeremiah we hear, “Blessed is the man who puts his trust in the Lord...he has no worries in a year of drought.”

But, contrary to Jeremiah’s advice, worrying is something most of us seem to do daily in our lives. It’s hard to remember in unpleasant situations that worrying is like a rocking chair. It will give you something to do, but it will get you nowhere!

Though hundreds of Years apart, there is a great deal of resemblance between the Old Testament Jeremiah and Jesus of Nazareth. Both were superstar prophets. They both courageously practiced a profession from which most people would flee from like the plague. No matter the consequences, each boldly spoke about matters that seemed to always get them in trouble. And both taught that trusting in God would lead to a more full life.

The Church in pairing these two readings today wanted us to see the resemblance between these two scriptural giants. The Church wants us to see that the earlier Jeremiah is in fact almost an exact copy of the Jesus and a promise of what Jesus would be.

Today’s gospel reading from Luke offers us a different set of Beatitudes than we are most familiar with. We are used to the eight Beatitudes from the gospel of Matthew. Luke offers just four. But the four that Luke shares with Matthew are considered the oldest version and contain the essential teaching. Luke also adds four “woes”, not found in Matthew, and intended to re-enforce, by contrast, the message of the previous Beatitudes.

The reason these gospels are so different is that Luke’s gospel was written by a convert and addressed primarily to gentile converts to Christianity. Luke’s audience was poor. Many were slaves or low born. Their choice to Christianity

only worsened their life situations. They were persecuted, and they suffered. In presenting the Lord's words to them, Luke places Jesus on an even plain. He was on a level with them. He was poor, suffered and persecuted.

Why does Luke even mention the Beatitudes? Because the Beatitudes give us, all who hunger for something, a feeling of hope and trust in God's awareness of our life situations. We are all hungry for the Lord in different ways. Many of us have been hungry this way and are still hungry for the Lord. We made retreats, had spiritual experiences and yet felt hungry for more. God is a meal that never quit fills us but always gives us hope and trust that we will find newer and fuller nourishment through His Spirit.

Earlier in St. Paul's First letter to the Corinthians he reminds us that there are three things that should be most important in our lives, *Faith, Hope and Love* and the greatest of these is Love. So on this **World Marriage Day** let me tell you a short but true story about trust and love. It's about how a man found his wife, it really happened in 1920, long before on-line dating services.

This man placed an ad in a local newspaper that went like this: "Middle-ranking civil servant, single, Catholic, 43, immaculate past, from the country, is looking for a good Catholic, pure girl who can cook well, tackle all household chores, with a talent for sewing and homemaking with a view to marriage as soon as possible. Fortune desirable but not a precondition."

A woman named Maria Peinter answered the ad. She was 36 years old, a trained cook and the illegitimate daughter of a baker. She did not have a fortune, but even so, they married four months later. In spite of their somewhat advanced years they had three children – two boys and a girl. The youngest child received the same name as his father: Joseph.

You see we know Joseph by his full name Joseph Ratzinger. He is better known today as Pope Benedict XVI.

Joseph and Maria Ratzinger illustrate the faith, hope and love we hear about today. They had a love based on trust in the Lord: a love that endures because it places God first.

Is it any wonder that Pope Benedict's first encyclical is entitled, "God is love," described marriage as the pre-eminent figure of God's love for us.

Today we pray, as always, for the courage to trust that God is with us through all of our lives and that God puts us on earth to shine as lights for others to see by our faith, hope and love.