

CHRIST OUR HOPE CATHOLIC CHURCH

FAITH IN LAITY CORNER



"Us jest prayed for strength"

Monday, February 18, 2019

Reading Jer.17:4-8; Mk.6:17, 20-26

6th Sunday of Ordinary Times

Firm Trust

Entering the 6th week into Ordinary times, one reflects during the month of February in the United States, as the time set aside to focus on the heritage of peoples of African descent and some of their contribution to our world, to our country and our communities. There is need to reflect on the survival of a people who were stolen from their homeland, forced across the ocean to unknown lands; held in 'relocation sheds' before being placed on arriving ships for the transatlantic voyage; never to see their homeland or relatives again in this life.

One must admit there had to be a '*God force*' of firm trust which enabled these battered people to get through over 400 years (*and still counting*) of humane rights removed, denials of education, lack of land ownership or the right to earn wages for their labor. How did these people survive from one generation to the next? Each generation continuing to fight, to thrive and to slowly push forward? It was a firmly planted faith that could move mountains, it was with unshakeable trust, it was a blind faith that God did have a better plan for their lives, yet if one generation did not achieve the victory, victory was to still come.

*“Blessed are those who trust in the LORD;
the LORD will be their trust” (Jer. 17:7)*

Jeremiah called upon the name of the Lord, just as enslaved people learned about God, and their relationship had to be a very powerful experience. They suffered much: land clearing, planting, the sickness and pain for children taken because they were sold, to labor in the fields, their faith was their only hope.

*“They are like a tree planted beside the waters
that stretches out its roots to the stream:” (Jer.17:8)*

God bathed the souls of our African ancestors with the trusting calm of being planted by this unseen river, with a cool stream to relieve the pain of the hard, harsh work. The many times of despair -seeing death by hard labor, disease, beating, and exhaustion. Hours of backbreaking work, there was some *Force* giving them energy, which was greater than we can ever imagine. The Beatitudes say

*“Blessed are you who are now weeping,
for you will laugh” (Lk.6:21)*

One learned that faith and trust in God does not remove us from the painful realities of life; but in the face of beatings, lynching, being sold as property, enslaved people, *my enslaved ancestors*, yet in the many moments of pain,

*“It does not fear heat when it comes,
its leaves stay green;” (Jer. 17:8)*

It was the need to remain focused to continue to strive, to long for true freedom; which did nothing to take the stigma from lack of fair educational opportunities, financial

resources, or a legal system which guarded the rules of various forms of suppression just as strict as enslavement. The Beatitudes' in Luke's Gospel.

*“Blessed are you who are poor,
for the kingdom of God is yours.” (Lk.6:20)*

God's mercy was there as those enslaved held on to the trusting faith of the *poor in spirit*, knowing that there was a greater inheritance, maybe not on this side of the world, but in the next.

“Blessed are you when people hate you” (Lk.6:22)

We live today with some deep roots of this hatred, still alive!! Yes, the plant at the top has withered, but the roots of the race issues persist and with legislature modestly crafted to allow inequalities in housing, health, clean water, social amenities to continue with few restraints- it's alive. Let us not forget what Jesus said on living the Christ life, what will be the condemnation? Jesus listed a series of *'Woes'*

“But woe to you who are rich,” (Lk. 6:24)

“But woe to you who are filled now,” (Lk. 6:25)

“Woe to you when all speak well of you,” (Lk. 6:26)

For those who have perpetrated these crimes over the centuries a price has to be paid, if restitution was not paid on Earth in this life; it will require remittance forever in the next.

We pray for our ancestors who travelled from lands many of us will never know, forefathers and mothers who paved the way with their tears and prayer. May we not forget to pray in trust that the struggle for equity and human dignity will not be as difficult for our children and the next generation to move forward.

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