

6<sup>th</sup> Sunday Ordinary Time

February 16-17, 2019

*The Lord Never Disappoints*

Readings: Jeremiah 17:5-8; 1 Corinthians 15:12, 16-20; Luke 6:17, 20-26

“Blessed is the one who trusts in the LORD, whose hope is the LORD.” Disappointment is a painful lesson in life, one that we typically learn in some form early on in life. While it certainly can be motivated by an undisciplined greed for position or power, more likely it is because we really wanted something and were passed over.

I was a member of the school patrol in the 6<sup>th</sup> grade. We held up the orange flags at intersections to provide safe passage for the kids. In those days, most everyone walked to school, as they were close by in neighborhoods. Only one member of the class was chosen to be the Sargent, and it was not I. While not crushed, I was disappointed. Was I greedy? Perhaps, and in that case, it was a valuable lesson.

At other times our disappointment is much more heart wrenching. We may be disappointed in our relationships, our performance at work, school, in our sports team and yes, even in our Church. We may have high expectations that were crushed when we did not perform as we thought we should. Where does this feeling originate?

The starting place might be asking ourselves in whom or in what do we place our hope and trust? “Blessed is the one who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.” To use Jeremiah’s analogy– trust in the Lord enables us to be like the tree planted beside the waters. Our roots are deep and extensive; our foundation is firm and not easily shaken. Trust in the Lord affords one a steadiness of life which sees us through both times of plenty and want.

Trusting the Lord enables us to endure, like the tree planted alongside its source of sustenance. It provides support, whether in the blistering heat from above or the parched land below.

I think of a passage from the Book of Sirach: “The day of prosperity makes one forget adversity; the day of adversity makes one forget prosperity.”<sup>1</sup> This steadiness to my thinking is constitutive of a long-lasting spiritual health. We cannot ride the wave from one amazing experience to another; it cannot last. We must be rooted.

Disappointments happen. The key point of reflection is whether or not they will crush you? Will they overcome you, robbing you of peace? The answer to that question is largely within your purview. “Cursed is the one who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh,” says Jeremiah.

Why does he say this? Because the flesh, by its very constitution, is finite and cannot quench our capacity for infinite love. Flesh is material and confined to space. Our souls are immaterial and can reach for the infinite and experience union with God through grace.

This past week, the Holy Father approved a second miracle to the intercession of Bl. John Henry Newman, paving the way for him to be declared a saint. Later in his life, the Anglican convert was named a Cardinal and was extremely revered and well-known for his writings and sermons. Newman himself once said, “I have nothing of a Saint about me as everyone knows ... It is enough for me to black the saints’ shoes – if St Philip uses blacking, in heaven.”<sup>2</sup>

The Lord calls blessed those who have put their trust in his kingdom to come, and not in the security of the present life. A heart that longs for heaven forms the core of every human person. Like a deer that longs for running streams, so my soul longs for you My God. Do we long to be a saint or to be admired by others?

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<sup>1</sup> Sirach 11:25

<sup>2</sup> Letter to Miss Munro, from the Oratory, February 11, 1850. (referring to polishing shoes)

Once, Newman's grand-nephew came for a visit. When he saw his great uncle, now dressed as a Cardinal, the boy asked: "Which is greater, a Cardinal or a Saint?" Without any hesitation, Newman responded: "Cardinals belong to this world, and Saints to heaven."<sup>3</sup>

At some point we come to the realization that only one person is ultimately responsible for our happiness. That person is us. Yes, it is a gift from God, but we must cooperate with the graces he offers to us. Whether Ben Sirach or Jeremiah speaking the words of the Lord today, the great leaders in the Bible were not afraid to put the question back to the people.

You, you must choose. No one can do it for you. You must choose to trust the Lord, and Him alone.

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<sup>3</sup> Louis Bouyer, *Newman, His Life and Spirituality: An Intellectual and Spiritual Biography of John Henry Newman* (San Francisco: Ignatius Press), p. 426.