

Theme: A Message of Hope and Comfort

As we celebrate Father's Day today, we honor our Fathers both living and deceased. We thank God for blessing us with these great men in our life. We ask our heavenly Father to bless our earthly fathers for their fatherly love for us. They are God's gifts to us. Happy Father's Day to you all our beloved Fathers!

A message of hope and comfort is a major theme I notice in all the three readings on this 11th Sunday in Ordinary Time. In the first reading, the prophet Ezekiel whose name means "God, My Strength," brings a message of hope and comfort to his fellow citizens of Israel in Babylonian exile.

Let me give you a brief background of his prophecy. During the reign of Zedekiah, the king of Israel, he and his people rebelled against God. God punished them by allowing King Nebuchadnezzar to take them into exile in Babylon. Ezekiel was a priest among these deportees at Babylon in 597 BC. It was there that God called Ezekiel to be his prophet to his people. Prophet Ezekiel comforts his troubled and despairing fellow citizens with the promise of God's kingdom to come. He assured them the kingdom of God would be a kingdom of prosperity and peace with the Messiah, an anointed king who would rule over them. He said, the Lord, Mighty God would undo the actions of the Babylonian King by rebuilding the Davidic dynasty so that all nations will realize that only Israel's God can restore people's destiny. The kingdom of Israel is compared to the shoot of a cedar plant. Israel, like the humble and defenseless shoot of cedar plant, will come forth as a strong and powerful nation.

The first reading prepares us for the Gospel reading where God's kingdom awaited by the Hebrews becomes the Christian Kingdom of God with Jesus Christ, Messiah, anointed King. Mark in his Gospel also brings a message of hope and comfort to the early Christians who were going through persecutions because of their faith in Jesus Christ. He urged them to put their total trust and faith in God. He told them God will always be with them. Just as a farmer sows a seed and God takes care of the seed and it grows to harvest time, God will certainly take care of them. They are also to let the Word of God, the seed planted in them, grow until the coming of Jesus Christ when he will reward them for their fidelity to him. They are to be patient and be hopeful for Jesus Christ who has initiated the Kingdom of God and will bring it to fruition at the final day.

St. Paul in the second reading also preaches a message of hope and comfort: "We are always courageous." He also admonished the early Christian community in Corinth to be patient with



themselves and with their fellow Christians. They are to remember that “We walk by faith, not by sight.” It means we must aim at eternal life and not this earthly life. We must have a strong faith in Christ and his Gospel message that no suffering or persecution will deter us from him. Those who walk by faith and not by sight are those who, no matter the storms of life they are going through, they will continue to sing praise and thanksgiving to God. For them, God is good all time, and all the time God is so good.

Fellow parishioners, reading and listening to what is happening in our world today, these readings of this Sunday in Ordinary Time are very relevant and applicable for us also. High inflation in our country, protests in some of our universities, the continued wars in Ukraine and the Holy Land, to mention a few, are really major concerns for us all. Some folks seem to be giving up hope in this great country. We need a message of hope and comfort especially as we prepare for the general election in November. We must consecrate our family and the country to Sacred Heart of Jesus and that of Mother Mary for God’s intervention. We have to continue to pray for God’s direction and guidance to get the right people to lead our beloved country. When we come together and pray, God always answers our prayers. Don’t give up! Better days are coming!

In my homily this past weekend, I asked for continued prayers for unity and collaboration for our family and country. With unity and collaboration, and faith in our mighty God, we can accomplish great things together. Let us be patient with one another and learn to walk by faith, not by sight as St. Paul advised us to do in the second reading.

As we begin our summer vacation, please be assured of my continued prayers for you and your loved ones. Please take some time and go on vacation as part of your self-care. You need it!

Wishing you and your family a blessed summer.