

FEBRUARY 26, 2017 SUNDAY

Reading IIS 49:14-15

Zion said, "The LORD has forsaken me; my LORD has forgotten me." Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you.

Responsorial Psalm PS 62:2-3, 6-7, 8-9

R. (6a) Rest in God alone, my soul.

Only in God is my soul at rest;
from him comes my salvation.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my stronghold; I shall not be disturbed at all.
R. Rest in God alone, my soul.

Only in God be at rest, my soul,
for from him comes my hope.
He only is my rock and my salvation,
my stronghold; I shall not be disturbed.
R. Rest in God alone, my soul.

With God is my safety and my glory,
he is the rock of my strength; my refuge is in God.
Trust in him at all times, O my people!
Pour out your hearts before him.
R. Rest in God alone, my soul.

Reading 2 1 COR 4:1-5

Brothers and sisters: Thus should one regard us: as servants of Christ and stewards of the mysteries of God. Now it is of course required of stewards that they be found trustworthy. It does not concern me in the least that I be judged by you or any human tribunal; I do not even pass judgment on myself; I am not conscious of anything against me, but I do not thereby stand acquitted; the one who judges me is the Lord. Therefore do not make any judgment before the appointed time, until the Lord comes, for he will bring to light what is hidden in darkness and will manifest the motives of our hearts, and then everyone will receive praise from God.

Alleluia HB 4:12

R. Alleluia, alleluia.
The word of God is living and effective;
discerning reflections and thoughts of the heart.
R. Alleluia, alleluia.

Gospel MT 6:24-34

Jesus said to his disciples: "No one can serve two masters. He will either hate one and love the other, or be devoted to one and despise the other. You cannot serve God and mammon. "Therefore I tell you, do not worry about your life, what you will eat or drink, or about your body, what you will wear. Is not life more than food and the body more than clothing? Look at the birds in the sky; they do not sow or reap, they gather nothing into barns, yet your heavenly Father feeds them. Are not you more important than they? Can any of you by worrying add a single moment to your life-span? Why are you anxious about clothes? Learn from the way the wild flowers grow. They do not work or spin. But I tell you that not even Solomon in all his splendor was clothed like one of them. If God so clothes the grass of the field, which grows today and is thrown into the oven tomorrow, will he not much more provide for you, O you of little faith? So do not worry and say, 'What are we to eat?' or 'What are we to drink?' or 'What are we to wear?' All these things the pagans seek. Your heavenly Father knows that you need them all. But seek first the kingdom of God and his righteousness, and all these things will be given you besides. Do not worry about tomorrow; tomorrow will take care of itself. Sufficient for a day is its own evil."

Reflection:

THE GOSPEL IS A STRONG CHALLENGE to the lifestyle that prevails in most of our cities in the so-called developed world and in many parts of the developing world too. Jesus puts it very bluntly: "You cannot at the same time be the slave of God and money (and this includes all the things that equate to money, like property, cars, clothes, foreign holidays, etc.)" As such, he does not criticize the having of things. What is in question is our attitude towards them, our being in thrall to them, having our lives controlled by them and, above all, being unable to share them with those in real need. Also in question is the false illusion that, if we have money and power, we have control of our lives. We are secure. Nothing could be further from the truth. So ultimately Jesus is teaching us that our only real security is total trust in God's love for us.

Function of money

Money primarily is a means of exchange by which we can provide for the needs of our life, whatever those needs are at any given time. The problem begins when money and the pursuit of money becomes an end in itself, "I want to be rich." Which soon becomes "I have to be rich". And, when I am rich, when I have lots of things, I will go to any length to hold on to them. It is amazing how very rich people keep being driven to make more till they have more than they could possibly spend. There was the case of a dollar billionaire in an Asian country who went to jail for insider trading on the stock exchange in order to make even more than he already had. And, after he came out of jail, he was worth more than twice than when he went in. When a very rich man died, someone asked how much he had left. "Every red cent," was the answer. "You can't take it with you," as the cliché, goes.

What will we bring with us?

And, in a way, that is what Jesus is asking us to consider. When we come to the end of our lives what do we want to bring with us and what do we want to leave behind? Would you want to die alone and desperately lonely and unlamented like billionaires Getty and Howard Hughes or be like a Mother Teresa and Mahatma Gandhi who just kept giving themselves to others and were mourned by millions?

Jesus is asking us today to reflect on what are our most basic values in life. Is it just what we want to have or is it what we most want to be? What is life about? Is it a matter of getting what we have not got or sharing with others what we have, however little it may seem to be? Is to be rich the only thing I want? Or are there other values, other more precious qualities which no bank can evaluate? What about things like happiness, peace, freedom, contentment, wonderful friends, a supportive family? Does having money guarantee us these things? Are they not available even to those who have little or no money?

Paul in today's Second Reading gives us another reason for not being obsessed with our future security. Here in the present, we simply have too much to do. We are, he says, Christ's servants. And as such, responsibilities have been entrusted to us, mainly to build up the Body of Christ in our Christian communities and to spread the Gospel message of God's love far and wide. "What is expected of stewards is that each one should be found worthy of [God's] trust." In other words, we are not being trustworthy stewards if, like the man in the parable, we take the gift that God has given us and bury it in the ground for fear it should be lost. No. If large sums of money or goods come our way, we are not to store them away. Our gifts are to be used here and now and every day. We should simply be too busy doing God's work to have time to worry about the non-existent future. As the saying goes, "Let go and let God".

To be fully alive, Fr Tony de Mello also used to advise: "Be yourself. Be here. Be now." Enjoyment and happiness are only in the present. Nowhere else. If we keep looking forward or looking back we will never find happiness. It is right here in our grasp at every moment of every day. Again as Fr Tony used to say, "You have everything you need right now to be happy." Do we believe that? How our lives would be transformed if only we could really believe it! Jesus puts the same thing today in different words, "Do not worry about tomorrow: tomorrow will take care of itself." God is only to be found in the here and now; he is always available.