

8th Sunday A Ordinary Time - St. Mary of the Assumption

Introduction

My mother probably wouldn't mind it if I told you she's in her mid-90's. Almost every day I call Mom and Dad just to see how they are doing. But it's not a one-way street. Mom and Dad also want to know how I'm doing. Mom, in particular, often asks me if I am keeping warm in cold weather, if I'm getting enough to eat (that's never a problem!), and if I'm eating the right things (that is a problem).

I know a priest who has several brothers. Every Sunday night their mother would call all her sons. She wanted to know if they had gone to church that day. She asked the same question of her son, the priest.

Such love, a mother's love, is replicated many times over in this church this morning. You love your children of whatever age with a love that is both tough and tender, a love that is deep and enduring, a love that encourages your children to grow in faith, virtue, and goodness. The prophet Isaiah says that your love is a reminder of how much God loves us. "Can a mother forget her infant, be without tenderness for the child of her womb? Even should she forget, I will never forget you," says the Lord.

God Remembers

Sometimes, as you know, people do think that God has forgotten them. When tragedy or illness strike or amid life's many disappointments, people are tempted to think that God is nowhere to be found. Even if God exists, they say, he doesn't care about us, he's far away, detached & absent. Some who feel this way are former Catholics, and some belong to our families, yours and mine.

And it is entirely possible for *all* of us to fall out of love with God and to do so for a whole variety of reasons - But most of the time we simply replace God's love with inadequate substitutes, such as wealth, pleasure, power, or honor. Yet even if we fall out of love with God, we continue to yearn for his love. Nothing else satisfies the deepest longings of our hearts. As St. Augustine wrote: "You have made us for

yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in thee.”

What a beautiful invitation we’ve received today from Isaiah to fall in love with God. What a reminder of the beauty and tenderness of God’s love. Father Pedro Arrupe, the former head of the Jesuit Order, famously said: “Nothing is more practical than finding God, than falling in love in a quite absolute, final way.” Dear friends: fall in love with God and everything changes, for starters, two things: 1st, how we look at ourselves & 2nd, the freedom with which we lead our lives. The Second Reading and Gospel teach us about these two points.

The Manifestation of Conscience

In today’s 2nd reading we meet St. Paul as he responds to his critics in the Church at Corinth. They must have passed some pretty harsh judgments about St. Paul who had gone there to preach the Gospel & brought them to faith in Christ Jesus. But because of his utter confidence in Christ’s love and his trust in the utter reliability of the Gospel message, St. Paul proclaims himself to be trustworthy as teacher of the faith and as steward or minister of all God did to save us in Christ. And St. Paul goes even further. He is willing to lay open his conscience before God without holding anything back.

Of course, God already knows what in the depths of our hearts, just as our mothers know more about us than we like to think. But it’s a different thing when we *willingly* open our hearts to the Lord and lay bare our inmost thoughts, fears, and sins. When the light of Christ shines deep into our consciences, then we experience just how powerful & just how tender God’s love for us really is. That is why, during the upcoming season of Lent, I invite you to go to confession, to make a good, thorough, unburdening confession. Once our hearts are cleansed, the love of Christ shines brightly in us & through us. People can see the difference once we’ve been reconciled to God and to others.

The Lilies of the Field

And this brings us to the Gospel in which Jesus asks us for a decision: Will we freely put our trust in His love or will we be enslaved by money and possessions? To help us answer that all-important question Jesus instructs us not to worry about what we eat or drink or wear. He points to the flowers in field: They don’t worry about how

they look: it's God who made them beautiful. He tells us that pagans, unbelievers, are all caught up in what to eat or drink or wear; but for those who love God, our first and only priority is to seek His Kingdom to become like the Christ of the Beatitudes.

We live in a world where wealth, pleasure, power, and honor count the most. How can we free ourselves from these false gods that bring so much unhappiness, and instead open our mind and hearts to the Lord so as lead lives of simplicity and love and trust? Jesus tells us not to worry about tomorrow...but we do. I have a 401 K - there's not much money in it - but I'm planning for the future and almost every family tries to save at least something for the future. Yet if that's where we *ultimately* put our trust we are sadly mistaken.

If we truly believe that the Lord loves us with a love that is even more trustworthy, enduring and beautiful than the love with which a mom or a dad or a favorite aunt or uncle has loved us - then we are not so worried about our possessions and our pleasures. We are free to experience the joy of loving God and of giving of ourselves to others.

Conclusion

You know, the Blessed Virgin Mary, the Mother of God is always at hand, always ready to lead us to her Son, ready to help us experience his love for us. She loved her Son Jesus with a love that was pure and undefiled. And she wants us to love her Son with a similar love.

St. John Vianney wrote tenderly about the love of the Blessed Virgin Mary for us. He told us that the love of all the mothers of the world is but a piece of ice compared to how Mary loves us and how ardently she wants to lead us to her Son. Let us ask our Patron, Mary assumed into heaven, to pray for us that we may re-discover the depth, beauty, tenderness, and endurance of God's love revealed by her Son Jesus Christ, crucified and risen, and poured into our hearts by the Holy Spirit.

May God bless us and keep us in his love!