

Theme: "A thorn was given me in the flesh,

July 5, 2015

Ezek. 2: 2-5

.....to keep me from being elated." **Thirteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time**

2 Cor. 12: 7-10

Brothers and Sisters,

Mk. 6: 1-6

Peace to you All!

As I promised last Sunday, I would prepare my Sunday Letter and use my own personal reflections on the Sunday Readings. But before anything else, I would like to thank God for a wonderful Carnival last Weekend. My heart goes out with sincere gratitude to all the members of the Carnival Committee for all their hard work, patience and understanding. I also would like to thank all the parish groups, communities, organizations that did their parts to ensure a successful Carnival. And lastly, to all the members of the parish as well as to all those who supported our Carnival, I say thank you very much. Congratulations to all the winners of our Raffles as well as to the newly crowned Carnival King Jerrick and Queen Larissa who worked so hard to raise money for our church. I hope that our Carnival would bring in much needed funds to reduce our parish debt and construct our new faith formation building sooner.

And now-here is my personal reflection on our Sunday Readings:

There are good sides and bad sides to life. And there is both the good and the bad side to every culture, society or community. In fact, in every person, there is a good side and a dark side to his personality. A person is not all bad nor good. Everyone has a little of both. As long as we live, we go through the struggles of having to deal with these conflicting sides within us. And until we start defining ourselves, until we begin to declare who we want to become, there stands always the danger that we would never belong to neither side of life. We cannot postpone our commitment to who we want to be in life for we will end up being tossed by the waves of indecision to the shore of the unknown where we end up to become who we do not want to be. This is the mystery about the evil and good in life. The world within us and around us are the playing fields for our moral decisions.

This is the kind of spiritual warfare that goes on within us every day and every moment. Good and evil exist because we are free. And we exercise our freedom every day we hardly notice how nor why. We find ourselves doing things we have not even thought of and end up making choices that we hardly desire. Our clear knowledge of good and evil and the consequences they bring forth upon us should provide us with enough reason to exercise our freedom. St. Paul explain this painful experience of life in these words: ***"For I know that nothing good dwells in me, that is, in my flesh; for the willing is present in me, but the doing of the good is not. For the good that I want, I do not do, but I practice the very evil that I do not want. But if I am doing the very thing I do not want, I am no longer the one doing it, but sin which dwells in me..."*** (Rom. 7: 18-20)

This dynamics of moral choices have always characterized the relationship between God and Israel throughout the Old Testament. God chose Israel as His own people, not because Israel deserved this privilege over other nations, but that she represented the poor, and oppressed and the enslaved nations in the world. And God comes into the aid of those who need Him and call upon His help. He called Israel the apple of His eye: ***"For thus saith the LORD of hosts; after the glory hath he sent me unto the nations which spoiled you: for he that toucheth you toucheth the apple of his eye."*** (Zechariah 2:8)

And yet, despite all the favors that God had showered upon Israel from the time that God brought them out from the land of Egypt and led them to the Promised Land, Israel had become rebellious against God and obstinate in her continued infidelity to God's covenant. And yet, God continues to forgive and nourish His people as a Shepherd would feed His flock. The word of God from the book of Ezekiel goes not just to Israel but to all nations who rebel against God and refuse to acknowledge Him as the Creator, the Source and the Purpose of all that exists.

The image of the **"thorn in the flesh"** proclaimed today from the second letter of St. Paul to the Corinthians has always provided me with hope, inspiration and strength. All of us have a "thorn in the flesh." This is the greatest source of evil that is within us. It can be our enslavement to power, fame, wealth, drugs, sex, gambling, or any other weakness that is the very source of all our failures, downfall and servitude to sin. They stand as the formidable wall between our desire to be enslaved by sin and our desire to be in communion with God. It is what stands in the way our salvation and fives path to our moral condemnation. However, that **thorn in our flesh** can be the only experience we might have to encounter the personal love and mercy of God. Where we are weakest God wants to be our strength. But where we become too elated and proud can be the cause of our downfall. If ever there is a place and moment where God desires to love us most and forgive us fully, it through the thorn in our flesh. That is where God wants to encounter us. ***"My grace is sufficient for you."***

Brothers and sisters, what is your own thorn in the flesh? What is your greatest weakness and failure, where you fall constantly to sin? Ask for the grace of God, and He will assure you He will be there. **AMEN!**

With all my prayers,

Fr. Ernie