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20th SUNDAY O/T – August 16, 2020 -JESUS SPEAKS IN PARABLES

Life messages:

- **We need to persist in prayer with trustful confidence.** Although the essential parts of prayer are adoration and thanksgiving, the prayer of petition plays a big part in most people's daily life. We cannot provide, by our unaided selves, for our spiritual and temporal needs. Christ himself has told us to ask him for these needs: "Ask and you shall receive." Asking with fervor and perseverance proves that we have the "great Faith" we need to be able to receive all that Christ wants to grant us in response to our requests. We must realize and remember that we do not always get exactly what we ask for, but rather what God knows we need, what He wants for us, and what is really best for us. What we need most is to receive the peace and security that come from being in harmony with God's will for us. As Christians, we also know that our particular requests may not always be for our good, or for the final good of the person for whom we are praying. In that case, the good God will not grant what would be to our, or their, eternal harm. But if the prayer is sincere and persevering, we will always get an answer – one which is better than what we asked for. Hence, let us trust that every time we pray for something, the answer is **already on its way**, even before we have asked God for it. We just need to trust God's timetable and infinite wisdom that He will answer us according to His will and purpose.
- **We need to pull down our walls of separation and share in the universality of God's love:** Very often we set up walls which separate us from God and from one another. Today's Gospel reminds us that God's love and mercy are extended to all who call on him in Faith and trust, no matter who they are. In other words, God's care extends beyond the boundaries of race and nation to the hearts of all who live, and God's House is intended to become a House of prayer for all peoples. It is therefore fitting that we should pray that the walls which our pride, intolerance, fear, and prejudice have raised, may crumble. Next, we have to be grateful to God for all the blessings we enjoy. As baptized members of the Christian community, we have been given special privileges and easy access to God's love. But we also have serious responsibilities arising from these gifts. One of these responsibilities is to make clear to others, with true humility and compassion, that God's love, mercy and healing are for them also because they too are the children of God.

Humour: Faith in theory and action: A man who was walking close to a steep cliff lost his footing and plunged over the side. As he was falling, he grabbed the branch of a tree that was sticking out about half-way down the cliff. He managed to hang onto a weak limb with both hands. He looked up and he saw that the cliff was almost perfectly straight and that he was a long way from the top. He looked down and it was a long, long way down to the rocky bottom. At this point the man decided that it was time to pray. He didn't pray a long, wordy prayer. He simply yelled out, "God, if you're there, help me!" About that time, he heard a deep voice coming from high up above that said, "I'm here My son, have no fear." The man was a little startled at first by God's voice, but he pleaded, "Can You help me? Can You help me?" God replied, "Yes, I can My son, but you have to have Faith. Do you trust Me?" The man answered, "Yes Lord, I trust You." God said, "Do you really trust Me?" The man, straining to hold on replied, "Yes Lord, I really trust You." Then God said, "This is what I want you to do: let go of the limb, trust Me, and everything will be all right." The man looked down at the rocks below, then he looked up at the steep cliff above him and yelled, "Is there anybody else up there who can help me?"

Recently Deceased: Angelo Vocale, *We especially pray for all the deceased whose names are on the Church pews & the Resurrection Chapel*

Please pray for the Sick : John Cianciarullo, Leanne, Nola, Nathalina, Kathy

.Did God Send the Covid Virus as a Judgment? Where Is God in a pandemic?

(Jesuit editor in New York Times)

http://www.gnmagazine.org/issues/gn57/tsunami_biblical.htm

In the *sometimes* over-abundant discussion now taking place about the current Covid virus, one sometimes hears the assertion that God has sent Covid 19 as a judgment upon us for our sins to make us repent. What are we to make of this? First of all, repentance is always a good idea. More than that, it is the usual lifestyle for Christians. **Repentance is not something we just do once when we first become believers; it is something we always do as part of our walk with God.** Every day we make an examination of conscience and repent of the sins we have committed during that day, confessing them to God and trusting in His mercy and forgiveness. *Sometimes* we make a thorough interior house-cleaning in the form of sacramental confession. But we are always striving to be repentant since, taught by the Lord's Prayer, we realize that we every day need both our daily bread and the forgiveness of our daily trespasses. We should do this whether or not we are sick with a virus or are in danger of such sickness. But—let's be clear—we can only repent of the things we have actually done wrong. We *sometimes* talk about "national repentance" or repenting as a nation. That is not entirely misguided, but it can hide from us fact that repentance is always personal, and is always coupled with a determination to amend one's life and not repeat the sin. I cannot repent (for example) of Canada's sins against the unborn, for I did not sin against the unborn, and I cannot stop my country from performing abortions. I can *denounce* the sin, but I cannot repent of the sin, since one cannot repent of something which one has done not. So, one wonders about the notion that God sent the virus so that Christians will repent of their nation's sins. Of course it is possible that God has sent the Covid virus to afflict everyone so that the nation as a whole will turn back to God. But though this is possible, it is beyond demonstration.

God does send disasters upon the world as judgments for its sins. A deistic view of God denies such direct involvement in the earth. It imagines that God, having made the world, went on permanent sabbatical and now just sits back and watches the world He made, like a couch potato watching Netflix. But the Biblical view of God asserts that God is intimately involved in the affairs of the nations, that He judges one and rewards another. "Does evil befall a city unless the Lord has done it?" (Amos 3:6). God rules over the nations, lifting up and putting down, guiding everyone and working His will, bringing Israel out of Egypt, the Philistines out of Caphtor, and the Syrians from Kir (Amos 9:7). Yet the specific details of His workings are not revealed to us. We therefore cannot suppose that a tsunami means that those inundated were being judged for their sins, or that those suffering an earthquake were the targets of divine wrath for impenitent transgression. The Lord warned us against supposing that there was a one-to-one causal relationship connecting suffering and sin. In Luke 13:1-5, we see that certain people thought that the Galileans slaughtered by Pilate must have suffered this fate because of their sins. And the people of Jerusalem supposed that those killed when the tower of Siloam fell upon them suffered this disaster because they were worse than others. Our Lord contradicted such views, and said that those who suffered those disasters were no worse sinners than anyone else, so that one could not assert that all disasters were the result of particular sins. A particular disaster *might* be the result of a particular sin with a causal connection between sin and suffering, but in the absence of specific prophetic revelation, one cannot know. And prophets are not very plentiful—and are (may I opine) rarely found posting on Facebook.

We must therefore sit very lightly upon the causes of any particular disaster. The current crisis reminds us to repent of the sins we have committed, but this does not mean that our sins caused the crisis. And hopefully Christians would be repenting all the time regardless of such national disaster. We cannot know whether or not God has sent the Covid virus as a judgment. What we *can* know is that repentance is always timely, that godly obedience to secular authorities is always required, and that opportunities to help a needy neighbour will always find their reward. Let us not inquire into things beyond our reach. There is plenty for our hands to do already without such speculation. Let us not occupy ourselves with things too great and too marvellous for us (Psalm 131:1). Instead, let us get to work with calm and quiet souls.