

**Fourteenth Sunday in Ordinary Time—July 4, 2021**

**Our Lady of Perpetual Help**

**First Reading: EZ 2:2-5**

As the LORD spoke to me, the spirit entered into me and set me on my feet, and I heard the one who was speaking say to me: Son of man, I am sending you to the Israelites, rebels who have rebelled against me; they and their ancestors have revolted against me to this very day. Hard of face and obstinate of heart are they to whom I am sending you. But you shall say to them: Thus says the LORD GOD! And whether they heed or resist—for they are a rebellious house—they shall know that a prophet has been among them.

**Responsorial Psalm: PS 123:1-2, 2, 3-4**

**R. (2cd) Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

To you I lift up my eyes who are enthroned in heaven — As the eyes of servants are on the hands of their masters.

**R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

As the eyes of a maid are on the hands of her mistress, So are our eyes on the LORD, our God, till he have pity on us. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy. Have pity on us, O LORD, have pity on us, for we are more than sated with contempt; our souls are more than sated with the mockery of the arrogant, with the contempt of the proud.

**R. Our eyes are fixed on the Lord, pleading for his mercy.**

**Second Reading: 2 COR 12:7-10**

Brothers and sisters:

That I, Paul, might not become too elated, because of the abundance of the revelations, a thorn in the flesh was given to me, an angel of Satan, to beat me, to keep me from being too elated. Three times I begged the Lord about this, that it might leave me, but he said to me, “My grace is sufficient for you, for power is made perfect in weakness.” I will rather boast most

gladly of my weaknesses, in order that the power of Christ may dwell with me. Therefore, I am content with weaknesses, insults, hardships, persecutions, and constraints, for the sake of Christ; for when I am weak, then I am strong.

**Gospel: MK 6:1-6**

Jesus departed from there and came to his native place, accompanied by his disciples. When the sabbath came he began to teach in the synagogue, and many who heard him were astonished. They said, “Where did this man get all this? What kind of wisdom has been given him? What mighty deeds are wrought by his hands! Is he not the carpenter, the son of Mary, and the brother of James and Joses and Judas and Simon? And are not his sisters here with us?” And they took offense at him.

Jesus said to them, “A prophet is not without honor except in his native place and among his own kin and in his own house.” So he was not able to perform any mighty deed there, apart from curing a few sick people by laying his hands on them.

He was amazed at their lack of faith.

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**INVITATION TO PRAY**

Pause for a few moments of silence and enter more deeply into the presence of God...

**Proclaim the Scriptures out loud**

As you listen to the scriptures be attentive to a word, a phrase, a question, an image, or a feeling that emerges. Reflect on this quietly or share it aloud.

**INVITATION TO REFLECT**

On May 13, 1981 an assassin's bullet ripped through the stomach of Pope John Paul II, and initiated a trial of suffering that lasted several months, required multiple surgeries, was complicated by a viral infection, and required two lengthy hospital stays. Yet through this ordeal Pope John Paul II maintained a positive spirit, and demonstrated ongoing concern for others and for the Church. Whereas many would have bemoaned their fate, Pope John Paul II confessed, "One hand fired, and another one guided the bullet." For him there is no doubt about the protection which saved him from death..."<sup>1</sup>

How people respond to the difficulties they encounter in life is a theme of this Sunday's Mass readings. We see God's people confronted with difficult situations, situations which most of us would call major problems. For instance, Ezekiel was given the very difficult task of trying to communicate with obstinate and rebellious people. Paul faced a different problem, he experienced a physical malady that some think was an eye disease, which hindered and limited his freedom to serve Christ. These problems, which are similar to ones we confront, reinforce the reality that a Christian believer is not immune to difficulties. On the contrary, they demonstrate that sometimes a believer's problems are multiplied by virtue of being a believer.

The issues we must face when we encounter problems is whether we view them as obstacles or opportunities, and whether we view ourselves as victims or victors. In honesty we must confess that frequently these situations are viewed primarily as obstacles wherein we do not see the opportunities, but only see ourselves as being victimized by unpleasant circumstances. The perspective which we need in order to change the way we view difficult circumstances, is faith, faith in the goodness of God and faith in the power of God to help.

We see in this week's Gospel reading that people's obstinate unwillingness to trust in Jesus created a situation where they could not experience Christ's power. They had the unfortunate inclination to view Jesus' power in light of their own limitations. However, for God's children life's problems are really opportunities for us to exercise our faith. As our faith is exercised it is made stronger through the process, and we experience Christ's power in new and unusual ways. Ezekiel couldn't be obedient and at the same time sit around and bemoan his job assignment. He had to believe that God knew what was best and in faith proceed with the assignment given him. Paul, utilized his faith to ask for deliverance from his malady, and when God said, "No," Paul used his faith not to simply surrender stoically to his condition, but to glory in it, looking to see how God's grace would be magnified through his life because of his sickness. Their faith in God's love and power enabled them to recognize, as did John Paul II, that in reality another hand, God's, directed their lives. When we view the difficulties and complications that enter our lives as wonderful opportunities to experience God's love, grace, and power, we will find ourselves at peace, energized to do what we can, and amazed at the miracles God works in us and on our behalf.

"For this reason, Jesus did not hesitate to proclaim the blessedness of those who suffer: 'Blessed are those who mourn, for they will be comforted. ...

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“This blessedness can only be understood if one admits that human life is not limited to our time spent on earth, but is wholly directed to perfect joy and fullness of life in the hereafter. Earthly suffering, when accepted in love, is like a bitter kernel containing the seed of new life, the treasure of divine glory to be given humanity in eternity. ... It is this hope that is nourished by Christ’s promise.”<sup>2</sup>

1 Be Not Afraid, by Andre Frossard.

2 Go in Peace, by Pope John Paul II, (page 171).

**INVITATION TO GROUP SHARING**

First Reading

1. Different temperaments would respond to this assignment in different ways. How would you have responded?
2. What provision did God make for Ezekiel to fulfill this assignment?

Second Reading

3. How have you seen God glorified through someone’s problems and difficulties?
4. What attitude or belief is at the heart of Paul’s contentment?

Gospel Reading

5. How do you view the miracles and power of Christ?
6. Why do you think people take offense at Jesus’ words and works?
7. Define skepticism and unbelief.
8. How can we avoid responding to Jesus’ words and works with skepticism and unbelief?

**INVITATION TO ACT**

*Determine a specific action (individual or group) that flows from your sharing. When choosing an individual action, determine what you will do and share it with the group. When choosing a group action, determine who will take responsibility for different aspects of the action. These should be your primary considerations.*

**CLOSING INVITATION TO PRAY**

*Give thanks to God (aloud or silently) for new insights, for desires awakened, for directions clarified, for the gift of one another’s openness and sensitivity. Conclude with a final prayer.*