

30th Sunday Ordinary Time Year “B”

October 24-25, 2015 (5:15p, 8:00a, 10:00a, 12:00p, 5:00 p) *Leftovers for the Lord*

Readings: Jeremiah 31:7-9; Hebrews 5:1-6; Mark 10:46-52

Leftovers...the dreaded answer to the daily question asked by so many children of their mothers- “What’s for dinner?” Of course, in reality, there is nothing wrong with leftovers, especially in my house. Good food is good food 24 or even 48 hours later. Still, the term bears a negative connotation difficult to escape, and we may in fact need to remind ourselves that there is nothing wrong with something just because it is not brand new. “Hand me downs” is another such term that carries with it some baggage.

Pre-owned vehicles have replaced Used Cars; re-conditioned appliances sound better than broken down and repaired, and the list goes on. “Retro” clothing seems to be all the rage; professional teams routinely wear “throwback” jerseys, just when we thought we had seen the last of the 1970’s.

In today’s reading from Jeremiah, the Lord refers to the Remnant of Israel. A remnant is a leftover- there is no other way to couch it. “The LORD has delivered his people, the remnant of Israel.” A remnant is a reference to the “remainder,” even a fragment or scrap...in short, a leftover. Nobody wants to be a leftover!

In truth, the word has several meanings with respect to the faith. Here it refers to those who were sent in exile to Babylon, the flock that the Lord promises to bring back to the fold. In other places, the remnant is to remain in the land, waiting there for God’s restoring mercy. When they fail to heed the advice and flee to Egypt, the wrath of judgment comes down-

“None of the remnant of Judah that have come to settle in the land of Egypt shall escape or survive.” (Jer. 44:13)

Increasingly, faithful Catholics feel as though they are a remnant, a holdover in a rapidly changing world. The Church is struggling to remain a prophetic voice of truth and justice in the world, while sadly, so many in modern society spurn these efforts.

We must guard against a dual temptation. First, we must guard against any sense of resignation when we fight the good fight of faith. We must not give into a sense of despair. Our voices do matter—they count, and they can have a positive effect in the world.

The other temptation is to pull away from the world in the wake of the many challenges therein. This too would be a mistake because time and time again, the Lord invites us to transform the world through our engagement with it, spreading the faith by means of our example and our evangelization. More importantly, the Lord is comforting us, telling us that He will lead us to “brooks of water, on a level road, so that none shall stumble.”

We are not abandoned to the wiles of the devil. We can become that “immense throng” about which Jeremiah wrote. We, the people of God, united in communion in the Church, are a powerful force of transformation for the world. However, if we choose to retreat from the world, the leaven will fail to rise. The world indeed judges us to be stale, clearly not “with the times.” We must pray that our pastors do not give into this temptation to alter the difficult truths, because those difficult truths are also saving truths.

There is no shame in being considered a leftover, when the food of which we partake is the Living Bread come down from heaven, the Eucharist celebrated in and through the Church, God’s very instrument of transformation for the world. If we must be seen as leftovers, at least let us be proud “leftovers” for the Lord.

I woke up way too early today and watched part of the closing Mass for the Synod on the Family in Rome. Not surprisingly, the bulk of media attention has been focused on several controversial aspects of a much larger discussion on marriage and family. More than a few people have expressed concern over the reports from the Synod, and have told me that they are confused. We need to be serene in the knowledge that God is with us; the Holy Spirit guides the Church, and we are called to trust.

In St. Peter's Square, there is an obelisk that is amazing in its own right, but is often overlooked due the magnitude of the Basilica. During the course of six months of 1586, in what itself is a monumental engineering feat utilizing elaborate winches, trusses and rollers, the Egyptian Obelisk was transported from the Circus Maximus where it had been for 1500 years. But on one side of this column is an inscription that bears mentioning this day:

*“Christus vincit, Christus regnat, Christus imperat; ab omni malo plebem suam defendat. **Christ conquers, Christ reigns, Christ commands—May He deliver His people from all evil.**”* These words were added to the obelisk by order of Pope Sixtus V and the column was placed directly in the center of the arms of the colonnade. The words are written in the present tense, not the past. The triumph of Our Lord Jesus Christ is an eternal one, every bit as relevant today as it was 430 years ago. To Jesus belongs the victory over sin and sadness. By his sufferings, he has redeemed the world, and he watches over us, our families and the Church.