

The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 13, 2022

Dr. Tim Gray is the president of the Augustine Institute. The Institute offers graduate degree programs and produces videos all geared toward helping people learn the Catholic faith. Like many such ministries, the Augustine Institute depends largely on donations for its funding. This ministry was hit particularly hard during the first months of 2020 when the pandemic was starting. Dr. Gray had to cancel many fundraising events he had scheduled for that year, meaning that one of their major sources of income was not going to be available to them.

Because of this, Dr. Gray reached out to some wealthy people who had made pledges to donate to the Augustine Institute. One after another had to cancel their promised donations because they had lost so much money in the stock market which had gone down about thirty percent in value at the beginning of the pandemic.

He called one last donor fully expecting that he would tell him that he too had to cancel his donation. Instead, this businessman told Dr. Gray that he was going to increase his pledge to \$250,000. Dr. Gray was flabbergasted by this donor's generosity and was at a loss for words. Finally, he told him, "Everyone else has been canceling their donations, I am so thankful that you are increasing yours. With all the losses in the stock market this year, how is it possible?" The donor replied, "I've lost some money in the stock market too. But everything I have comes from God and belongs to him. It's when things are bad that we have to step up and give more." Then he told Dr. Gray, "We have to trust God. If we do not fear God, then we will fear everything else. But, if we fear God, we will not fear anything else."

This wealthy businessman has a lot to teach us about trusting God. It is true that everything we have comes from God. He has provided for us in the past, He will provide for us today, and He will provide for us in the future. Nothing can happen that will change that. When we have this level of trust in God, we can face anything with confidence. We know that God is in charge and that He will see us through whatever challenges we may face. But, if we do not trust God, everything will seem overwhelming to us. We will start to panic and make rash decisions. We will hold on to

The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 13, 2022

what little we have rather than be generous with it.

It is precisely when we are under stress that we realize what level of trust we have in God. What gives us hope when we look to the future? Is it God and His love for us or is it the balance in our checking account? Is our hope for the years to come based on God's goodness or in the strength of the economy? Does our sense of security come from God who never changes or in the government? Or, as the prophet Jeremiah puts it in today's first reading, is our trust in human beings or in God?

Jeremiah tells us very clearly what people whose hope is only in the things of this world are like. They are like a barren bush in the desert that stays dry, brown, and dead. It can never grow or flower because it is rooted in land that is rocky, salty, and empty. That is what happens to us when our only hope is in the economy, in politics, or in people. We will be let down and disappointed. Everything will be bitter to us. Nothing will live up to our expectations. We will always be complaining because nothing is good enough.

But, Jeremiah holds out a promise for those whose trust is in God. They will be like a tree planted beside a river, which is constantly irrigated and refreshed. No matter how hot or dry it is, it will always have plenty of nourishment. Even in times of drought, it flowers and bears fruit. When we trust in God, we have joy both in good times and in bad times. Nothing makes us afraid because we have our eyes fixed on God who promises to provide for us. People who trust in God look to the future with hope because all things are possible for our Heavenly Father. The whole world and its future are in His loving hands. People who trust in God are free to be charitable and generous, they can give freely because they know that God will continue to provide for them.

What kind of person do you want to be? Do you want to be fearful, miserable, and despairing? Or do you want to be hopeful, joyful, and generous? The secret is simply to look to God and His love for security and hope. He will never let us down.

The Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time February 13, 2022

Putting our trust in God is also the key to understanding today's gospel.

Those who trust in God do not look to wealth for their identity. They can flourish even in poverty because their hope is in the Kingdom of God. They also do not look to food and drink to comfort them when things are difficult. Instead, they look to God for consolation and so can be joyful even in hunger. Those who trust in God are not indifferent to the needs of others. Finally, people who trust in God do not care what other people think of them. They stay true to their beliefs and principles even in the face of persecution. It is just such people whom God will bless.

In today's second reading, St Paul tells us, "If for this life only we have hoped in Christ, we are the most pitiable people of all." Christians have a vision of life that transcends this world. Our homeland is in heaven. That is where our hope lies. Even while we work to make this world a place transformed by the gospel of Jesus Christ, we keep our eyes fixed on the world to come. Trusting in God does not mean that bad things will not happen to us. Christians experience poverty, hunger, sadness, and persecution as much, if not more, than anyone else. The difference is that we can be joyful in it all because of our hope in God. Our world is in desperate need of hope and it can only come from God. If we live generously, caring deeply about others, and sacrificing ourselves to meet the needs of those around us, we will bring others to the God who is the reason for our hope and the source of our blessings.