

14th Sunday in Ordinary Time (C):
Missionary Disciples: Pilgrims of Hope, Yearning for the Treasures of Heaven

Isaiah 66:10-14c; Psalm 66:1-3,4-5,6-7,16,20; Galatians 6:14-18; Luke 10:1-12,17-20

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ,

Greetings with the words of the responsorial psalm, "Let all the earth cry out to God with joy."

How are you? Where are you? Who are you? These standard or ordinary questions are also questions of faith. They are connected and are significant for all of us as Pilgrims of Hope, yearning for the treasures of heaven.

When someone asks, "How are you?" We respond, "I am blessed!" With this response, we believe that every circumstance in life, good or bad, has a purpose because our lives are not defined or decided by good or bad luck. We live by the grace of God, not by good luck or bad luck. (Nabubuhay tayo sa biyaya ng Diyos, hindi sa swerte o malas.) We are the result of God's grace!

Then, there is another question, "Where are you? Or where are you at this time of your life?" We reply, "Here I am, Lord; I have come to do your will." This answer seeks to do God's will. We reiterate what our Lord Jesus desires for His followers: "For whoever does the will of my heavenly Father is my brother, and sister, and mother" (Matt 12:50). He reminds us that we don't just believe in God; we must obey God. And so, it is fitting to make our daily prayer, "Lord, help me to do your will."

The third question is, "Who are you?" We respond with, "I am a child of God." We proclaim the truth of who we are and how we become through the Sacrament of Baptism. Remember, the priest or deacon says towards the end of the rite of the Sacrament of Baptism as an introduction to pray the Lord's Prayer: "Dearly beloved, this child has been reborn in baptism. He is now called the child of God, for so indeed he is. In confirmation, he will receive the fullness of God's Spirit. In Holy Communion, he will share the banquet of Christ's sacrifice, calling God his Father in the midst of the Church. In the name of this child, in the Spirit of our common sonship, let us pray together in the words our Lord has given us."

As children of God and Pilgrims of Hope, we walk by faith, not by sight. In our walk of faith, there are always questions in life. Sometimes, these questions have no clear answers; often, the answers become clear only after several months or even years have passed.

I remember asking why God did not prevent my father from dying so he could still witness the day of my ordination to the priesthood. He passed away at the age of 61. It was a big letdown for our family. He was sick for eight years, but little did I know that he chose not to take medications for several years before he passed away. I believe he was not only trying to save us from financial problems for his medications, but he was also offering his pain for all of us, his children.

It is not the answers to our questions that help us move on; faith keeps us going. Faith is the gift that gives us the strength to persevere. It is a gift that blesses us and helps us thrive in the midst of our problems. It is a gift that graces us to find joy in living.

In his oracle, the Prophet Isaiah assures us that those who remain faithful to the end will be comforted by God, blessed, and will find joy. Our fidelity to God, our obedience, will be rewarded with joy (cf. Isa. 66:13-14). However, our Christian joy is not just a distant promise, but a present reality. For we are always in the enduring presence of the risen Lord Jesus, a comforting truth that brings us joy.

The greatest joy is the indwelling of the Lord in our lives. (Ang kaligayahan na walang kapantay ay ang pananatili o pananahanan ng ating Panginoon sa ating buhay). St. Paul proclaims this with conviction. He said, "May I never boast except in the cross of our Lord Jesus Christ, through which the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world" (Gal. 6:14). He attributed his perseverance not to himself, but to Jesus. While he doesn't deny there are crosses in life, he assured us we shall persevere with Jesus. His testimony is a common experience of the saints, such as St. Therese, who endured humiliations, and St. Damien of Molokai, who was misunderstood and maltreated during his time, yet they thrived because of Jesus.

Who we are with the Lord or how we are in Jesus is indeed good news! It is a source of joy and hope that we are His, and He is with us.

When the seventy-two were sent on a mission, they were commanded to travel light—no purses, backpacks, or extra sandals (cf. Lk 10:4). They are to travel light, that is, to embrace the Spirit of the one who sent them, Jesus. Therefore, their ultimate security is not what they have but to whom they belong. They belong to Jesus. It is good to reaffirm this consistently, for we all belong to Jesus, and this is our ultimate security.

When Jesus sent the seventy-two as lambs among wolves, he didn't send them to become helpless victims, but to be his living presence. The Lord is with them! He worked wonders through them. This is shown in their success in healing and casting out demons in Jesus' name, which they rejoiced in having done such mighty deeds. But our Lord immediately corrected them. He said, "I saw Satan fall like lightning from heaven." He warned them of the danger that they, too, would fall from heaven like Satan when they were overcome by pride. They must be aware of the insidious works of pride; it will lead them to imitate Satan, not the Lord. The joy that Jesus wants them and all of us to possess is not about success and power, but that their names will be written in heaven.

As Pilgrims of Hope, yearning for the treasures of heaven, our joy is not so much about success, power, and having all the things we want, but that our name is written in heaven. When we are humble and faithful to the end, our reward is to share in God's glory. We already have the foretaste of this reward, which we celebrate through the Holy Eucharist. Jesus is continually giving Himself to us so that we may be with Him and live in Him. Let us cry out to God with joy for this greatest gift!

God bless you!

Fr. Manny Hewe
Pastor