

27th Sunday in Ordinary Time 2022 C

“How long, O Lord? I cry for help but you do not listen! Why do you let me see ruin and misery?

Destruction and violence are before me; there is strife, and clamorous discord.” Watching the news, reading the papers, we understand exactly what Habukkuk is saying even after all these centuries. How do we find the face of God’s mercy and be people of Gospel hope in such a troubled world?

“Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us.” This formula for holiness comes from Mother Teresa, and it is worth hearing again – perhaps to remember with each new day’s challenges: *“Holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us.”* For Saint Teresa of Calcutta, it was more than a pious saying. It was the commitment of her life lived always in search of God’s mercy, stirring the gift of the Holy Spirit into a flame of charity that still inspires the world.

For Mother Teresa, accepting what Jesus sent was a life-long and continual openness to the guidance of the Spirit and to the people around her, including the poorest of the poor. First, she accepted a religious vocation with the Sisters of Loreto, answering a call she felt from her early years. Then, after 20 years of teaching, she accepted a far deeper challenge ... to leave the Loreto convent and live among the poor in Calcutta, with no plan except the Gospel. In 1950, she started the Missionaries of Charity, a community of 13 members; at her death in 1997, it numbered over 4000. She accepted both international praise and outspoken criticism for not doing enough to change the conditions of the poor. She accepted Hindus, Muslims, and Christians who came to her in need. She accepted both awards and death threats.

But of all that Saint Teresa of Calcutta accepted, two things stand out. First, she accepted the Cross, particularly in the form of a decades-long spiritual emptiness in her agonized search for God in prayer. She knew deep emotional anguish while never surrendering her trust at a far deeper place in her soul. Her

spiritual life seemed frozen in that moment of Good Friday when Jesus cried out from the Cross – “My God, my God, why have you forsaken me?” Like Jesus, her solidarity with the suffering and broken of the world united her so completely to the Cross that charity flowed out from her spiritual wounds, just as it did from Jesus at Calvary.

And second, Mother Teresa accepted people ... she accepted each person who came into her life, born and unborn, and took them under her care as she would accept Jesus Himself. These are levels of holiness far beyond me, but we can be reassured knowing that God’s Spirit can and does work in the world in this way. The saints move us to say, like St. Augustine, “Why cannot I do what these people have done?” – offering ourselves to God’s grace as best we can in our time and place and circumstance.

On Respect Life Sunday, we are encouraged by Saint Teresa of Calcutta to accept what Jesus sends us, with a genuine smile. That smile of course is not a false or forced cheerfulness, but a deeply-rooted confidence that while God may at times unsettle us, His love will never fail us. Each person, each event, even the difficult ones, can draw us closer to God’s mercy and love if we learn how to incorporate them into our prayer, sacrifice, and trust in God’s providence.

There is strife and clamorous discord, but there is also divine grace. There is ruin and misery, but also the presence of God’s Spirit, inspiring prayer and service in love. Thank you for the ways you do that in your families and communities. Here, we eat and drink because the Master has finished – finished the redeeming gift of the Cross that we may eat of the Bread of Life and the Cup of Salvation in the Eucharist. the Gospel. When people would praise her for her charity, or criticize her for not doing enough, Mother Teresa replied in words inspired by today’s Gospel: “I am only doing what we are all called to do by Jesus.” She was, of course, right. Because ***holiness does not consist in doing extraordinary things. It consists in accepting, with a smile, what Jesus sends us.***