

Homily – February 16th, 2025 – 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

You've probably heard about the "Sermon on the Mount" in the Gospel of Matthew. Well, this version is from the Gospel of Luke and doesn't happen on a



mountain. It happens after Jesus comes down the mountain and stood on a level place, a plateau perhaps. That's the opening line of today's gospel reading, "**Jesus came down**

the mountain with the twelve and stood on a level place." Luke tells us that Jesus spent the entire night on a mountain in prayer. When we enter into prayer honestly and openly, without any personal agenda, seeking only to do God's will, an alignment always happens. You can't spend even the shortest amount of time in prayer without having your consciousness expanded in some positive way. We are on the verge of a consciousness breakthrough both in the Church and in the world. Hopefully, we'll be ready with new wineskins for this new wine.

Similar to when Jesus prays, when we pray our will becomes aligned with God's will. To put it another way, we begin to see reality, the world, Truth, in the way that God sees reality, the world, and Truth. What Jesus experiences in prayer on the mountain that night, he just has to share it with others. Immediately after his night-long prayer, he calls his first 12 followers, the Apostles, and tells them that he wants them to be partakers of the mission he receive from God while he was in

prayer. Jesus is not going to build the Church alone. He was looking for collaborators then, and he's looking to us now.

After praying and choosing the Apostles, the next thing out of Jesus' mouth are those four blessed-are-you statements followed by four woe-to-you warnings. When you are aligned, when you put God and God's will first in your life, the Kingdom of God manifest itself not only in your life but all around you as well. What you're in touch with within seems to show itself outwardly and everywhere.

Saint Mother Teresa, when caring for the sick, dying, and destitute of Calcutta was known to say, "I see God everywhere, in every face I look into." Most of us, including myself, would just see sick, dying and destitute people and be overwhelmed with what we see. What made her different isn't that she was born more holy than the rest of us. I think the key was prayer. Before she went into the gutters of Calcutta, she did as Jesus did. She spent time in prayer. One day, her own religious Sisters approached her and suggested to her that they spend less time in prayer to start their day. Their rationale was that there were so many people in need, they should get to them as soon as they could, even if it meant skipping over prayer. Her response, and I'm totally paraphrasing her, went something like this, "Instead of praying less, I suggest you pray more. The poor will always, unfortunately, be with us. Get in touch with Christ firstly through prayer, and then you will be able to see him in the needy, and you will know what to do."

For me, prayer is like going to the mountain to encounter God. Service, on the other hand, is like coming down the mountain, standing on the plateau—the level ground where every human being stands—and bringing the love of Christ there.

I think Jesus, like the prophets before him who also had their minds attuned to the mind of God, saw the discrepancy between God’s vision for humanity (the mountain vision) and the way human beings were actually living (the plateau). And like all people who are prophetic, he tried to tell us that the poor, the marginalized, the forgotten of society already have the Kingdom of God within them. ***“Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the Kingdom of God.”*** It doesn’t say, “Blessed are you who are poor, someday, if you’re really good, the Kingdom of God might be yours.” For the poor, the kingdom of God is theirs already. The poor may be forgotten by the world, but they are precious to God. This world of the haves and have-nots may be the way of the world, but it is not the way of God. Money and unchecked power seem to rule the world, but love is the only enduring sign of God’s Kingdom.

Back in 1997, many of us flocked to the theatres to see the blockbuster movie “Titanic.” Coincidentally, having no connection to the movie, the musical “Titanic” debuted on Broadway the same year. The only connection between the movie and the musical was that they told the story of the sinking of the Titanic back in 1912. Before the fervor of the movie hit, on Rosie O’Donnell’s talk show she did something wonderful. In the audience was a 13-year-old boy named Joey Russell. His most prized possession was a postcard of the original Titanic signed by an actual survivor of the sunken ship. Four years prior, when Joey was nine years old,

he bought the card at an auction. The mania surrounding the release of the movie about the Titanic assured Joey an excellent deal, if he ever decided to sell his card. And he did decide to sell it—but not for his own benefit. Rather than seeing an opportunity to make money, Joey saw something else. He saw that the mother of his best friend, Kate, needed a bone-marrow transplant, if she was to have any hope of surviving leukemia. That's when Joey offered to sell his card in the hopes of raising money for the procedure. He needed at least \$60, 000, but the card was valued at only \$2, 000. After hearing about his kindness and his dilemma, Rosie O'Donnell invited him to her talk show. She introduced Joey and called him from his seat in the audience to join her on stage. After showing her the autographed Titanic postcard, the cast from the musical "Titanic" assembled on stage, sang one of the production's songs, and offered to buy Joey's postcard for \$60, 000. The boy gave them the card, and they gave Joey a cheque for \$60, 000.

One person's selfless act of concern and kindness spawned concern and kindness in a whole bunch of other people. And because of it, Joey's friend's mother could get her life-saving transplant.

Before Jesus engaged the world, he spent time in prayer. With the vision he received in prayer, he then shared with 12 people, the Apostles. The Apostles caught the vision and passed it on to others, who passed it on to others, who passed it on to us. That's how you overcome the discrepancy of God's vision for the world and the way the world actually is.

Jesus came down from the mountain to the plateau. The 13-year-old boy on the Rosie O'Donnell show did the same. Now it's our turn.

~Fr. Phil