

HOMILY for the Saint Mary's School Service, Friday - June 26, 2009, 7:30 A.M.

St. Mary the Virgin Parish, Sagada, Mountain Province

Texts: 2 Corinthians 5:14-21; Mark 4: 35-41

Title: "We are built through and for storms."

(A Shared Homily by: Ms. Jacqueline Tampic, Padi Princl Balitog, and Padi Tony Gomowad)

Introduction:

Princl -

In behalf of the Parish Council and the wider Family of St. Mary the Virgin Parish, I welcome you all again to God's house. As rector, I want to make sure that everyone of you, your family members, friends and visitors, know that you are welcome to God's house, and to the parish facilities. There are always places for your guests and family members to stay at the Parish Office facility, and some more at the Rectory if necessary. Here in Sagada, the earthly meaning of Jesus' assurance is literally true, "In my Father's house there are many rooms, and they are ready." Just go and see Susan Anosan who is the Parish Office Manager, or see me if it's outside of office hours.

We are blessed this morning to have two ministers and preachers. Let me first introduce our Deacon Intern, Ms. Jacqueline Tampic. She will be with us for a year. She hails from Lubon, Tadian. She's here to put to the test all that she had learned at the Seminary. While doing that, it is hoped that she would also grow up spiritually as well as develop her skills in the exercise of the ministry.

Also with us today is Padi Tony Gomowad who may be more familiar with your grandparents and parents but whom you may need to introduce yourselves to when you meet him. I learned that he graduated at SMS in 1973! He grew up around the dap-ays of Dolkigan and Malingeb and like your allapos, has a mind-record of the old Sagada villages. Anyone doing a paper on these matters could make use of him as a resource while he's around until July 3rd. Again, welcome to our second school service.

A. The inalienable rights of believers in Jesus Christ.

Jacqueline –

Thank you Padi.

I would like to start by pointing out what's probably the greatest privilege there is given to humans. In the words of St. Paul in his Letter to the Romans, "For I am convinced that neither death nor life, neither angels nor demons, neither the present nor the future, nor any powers,

neither height nor depth, nor anything else in all creation, will be able to separate us from the love of God that is in Christ.” (8:38-39) There is nothing that can really separate us from the love of God. This is truly an amazing grace, a gift that God had given through Jesus Christ. God had you in his mind before you were born. God is with you like the air you breathe throughout your life, and God is with you all of your life. St. Paul who discovered this insight exuberantly declared, “In all these things, we are more than conquerors through Jesus Christ who loved us.” This message about God’s love is at the core of our Seminary education, and it is the core of our message, the same message that St. Paul referred to as the “ministry of reconciliation” in which Jesus embraced everyone and everything into God’s bosom.

I look forward to growing in faith and in the exercise of the ministry with you all in this wonderful place.

Princel –

Jacqueline, I am glad that you mentioned “growing up in faith” with us. Yes, for that is one of the main goals of internship, greater than developing skills in the practice of pastoral care or ministry. I believe that Sagada offers a good context for spiritual and professional growth. You may also have a unique gift to offer us in Sagada. Our town has lots of caves and tavers, many of these are still to be explored. And you need light to get to them. That may also speak well as a metaphor for our church status. If you live up to your name, "Tampic", we would need your new energy and perspective to awaken us and give light to some of the hidden areas and gifts that we have. In return, I assure you that you'd not only grow older, but grow up in faith, consciousness, and efficiency in the ministry of reconciliation.

Now, I look at you, students, faculty, everyone in this sanctuary, and I realize that I am seeing the living fruits of the faith of Jesus’ disciples, generations upon generations of saints and martyrs, and specially the first missionaries who brought the faith to Sagada, and the faithful servants who had nurtured the faith down to us! Yes, if you are a believer in Christ, you are a living evidence of the faith, every one of you. This is a great gift that comes with a consequence. As living fruit of the Faith, we must grow spiritually, doing our best to know more about Jesus, God’s love for us, and letting God help us to grow and become the persons that God would want us to become. This means growing in our bodies, mind, heart and spirit, so that we may render the best service we are able in our life.

B. Growing up in faith, knowing the object of our Faith.

Tony –

“Growing up in faith” is necessarily challenging, and requires perseverance. But then, it is the same with growing in intelligence, emotional maturity, social skills and even growing physically. We spend a great number of our best years in school, and that should be. And yet there is so much to learn, about our present world, and our history, and we are dazzled with the future! Even about ourselves, we cannot fully know about the wonders of our being. William James of Singing, the Father of American Psychology wrote that “compared with what we

ought to be, we are only less than half awake.” We are using only one-tenth of our potentials – the rest would remain as such, potentials.

Growing in the spirit, that is, growing in our faith and relationship with God is equally challenging! The process includes going through difficult times, going through literal storms and other storms in life such as sickness, loneliness, pains, death, and other challenges of life. Our second reading this morning tells the story of Jesus and his disciples facing a storm at sea. The disciples did all they could in balancing the boat, and in their desperation, they woke Jesus and asked for help. That’s when they witnessed Jesus stilling the winds and the waves! And they were shocked at what they saw, with a new question, “Who then is this, that even the winds and the waves obey him?” Their faith must have been radically shifted. For one thing, they discovered that their expertise as fishermen was not enough. They must focus on Jesus Christ whose presence would make all the difference. Believers through the ages shared a common experience of God who is the Creator of the Universe and yet also a personal God who is interested in every person’s life, and in an amazing way, this God is present through faith and relationship with Jesus Christ, in sickness or in health, in times of abundance and scarcity, in human and world history, through all of life.

Jacqueline –

This presence of the Spirit in us, believers, that strengthens and encourages us in our life calls to mind the words of St. Paul in Romans 8:11, “And if the Spirit of him who raised Jesus from the dead is living in you, he who raised Christ from the dead will also give life to your mortal bodies through his Spirit, who lives in you.” This means that Jesus makes known his presence to those who believe in him no matter where they go or what challenges they face. The gospel according to John also says, “But you know him, for he lives with you and will be in you.” (John 14:16) Unfortunately, there are many times that we are not conscious about this. In fact sometimes, God seems to be far away; or if God is present, he doesn’t seem to make a difference, such as when a loved one gets sick and dies, or when there are terrible accidents, or when our prayers are not answered as we had prayed.

C. Faith takes on a developmental process

Princel –

Yes, the biblical people showed us that their faith and experience of God sometimes present a contradiction. For example, the disciples all except John who got exiled in an island were martyred or died a violent death. Most of our famous saints had suffered because of their faith, or in obeying their faith in God. God seems not interested in solving problems or removing challenges; instead God is interested in growing our faith, in knowing him not only in good times, but more so in the midst of difficulties and challenges. The apostle James encourages believers, “Consider it pure joy, my brethren, whenever you face trials of many kinds, because you know that the testing of your faith develops perseverance. Perseverance must finish its work so that you may be mature and complete, not lacking anything.” (James 1:2-4) **We, Christians are built through and for storms.** We are lucky to have God’s spirit who makes us see meaning even in the difficult experiences in life, and makes us grow through them.

Conclusion

Tony -

Please know that we are praying with and for you all.

May you rise each new day with God's light in your heart.

May you prepare for each school day with eager anticipation of learning something new and working with fellow learners.

May you have joy individually and together in your journey of growing and maturing as children and servants of the Living God.

May you remember that God wonderfully loves you and his presence is with you through all of your life.

Princl -

And in the words of St. Paul, "Glory to God, whose power working in us, can do infinitely more than we can ask or imagine; Glory to him from generation to generation in the church and in Christ Jesus, our Lord. Amen." (*Ephesians 3:20-21*)