

Discouraged or Depressed

Have you ever found yourself discouraged or depressed? I know that I have. The more I watch the News on TV, or read the Newspaper, the more I become discouraged about the difficult problems in our Society. Why do people have to kill and steal, or hurt others? Why does one group have to become so angry about another group?

When I turn to Politics, I become even more depressed. One party rails against another party—and you know that it simply because they want Power, not because the other is bad or evil. Political debates sound like the selfishness of one group over against the righteousness of another group—and you know that that simply isn't true.

And when I turn to the Church, my discouragement continues. Some brothers and sisters refuse to understand each other—rather than find how much we agree and find our unity in Jesus Christ, they find fault with one another; refuse to work with their own family members and prefer to listen to preachers downgrade their fellow Christians. It is so bad that there over 4000 separate Christian denominations, to say nothing of those who are convinced that they are the only true Christians, and all the others are heading to hell. It is enough to make our Blessed Lord cry.

It's nothing new—we people almost prefer to live depressed and discouraging lives—rather than turn to the Lord and expect Him to change us into faithful and cheerful Christians.

This morning, I want to tell you a story of one Man of God who with his Faith in God, restored the fortunes of his people, trusting in God for the power to do it all. His name was Ezekiel, and we heard about him in the First Lesson at mass this morning.

At the time Ezekiel lived, about the 6th century BC, the Jewish people had been defeated in battle, had watched as their capital city of Jerusalem has been pillaged and their Temple destroyed, and finally had been marched out of their own land all the way to Babylon (which is in modern day Iraq). It was called the Babylonian Captivity, and all the skilled and learned people of Israel were taken as captives to Babylon, there to be slaves of this pagan people. Some of these Jews were assimilated into this pagan society, but a remnant of Jews met Sabbath by sabbath by the River Euphrates to sing the songs of Israel and mourn for their lost Temple. They remembered that so many of their men folk, husbands and fathers and grandfathers, had been killed in the final battle with the Babylonians, so that their dead bodies had been left unburied by the thousands to rot in the sun in the valley of Jezreel. They were depressed, discouraged, yearning to be back home, and yet certain that they would never see their homeland again. As they said: "It is hard to sing the Lord's songs in an alien land."

And then, one day, a young man stood up and said: "Last night I had a dream." In my dream, the Lord took me to the Valley of Jezreel and showed me the thousands of dry

bones that lay there. And God asked me, Man can these bones live again? And in my dream, I answered: Oh Lord only you know. And God said: Man, prophesy to these bones; and as I did, there was a great rattling, and the bones came together, and sinew and flesh came upon the bones where they lay. [Sing 'Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones ... and invite the people to sing with you.]

And the Lord told me again to Prophecy to the Spirit, and I did; and Breath came into these dead bodies, and they rose up and stood—a mighty army.

And the Lord said: “These bones are the people of Israel. They are depressed and discouraged. But I will put my Spirit within them, and they shall live; and I will bring them back to their own home and their own land. And they shall worship me there again.” The Jews heard these words and trusted in God; the Lord had not forgotten them and would take them back home. And their enthusiasm grew, and their faith grew—and several decades later, it happened just as the Lord had said. And the people of Israel returned to their land with singing and praise.

But what about us today? Are you discouraged when you look at our society? A society seems to care only for dollars, and power and sex. Discouraged when we live in a Church that cares deeply for Justice at the expense of a sure faith in Jesus as Saviour and Lord?

Well, remember Ezekiel. In the midst of a discouraged people, Ezekiel brought them back to faith in a God who heals, who cares, and who remembers. Right now, the Lord is working in His Church, and in you, His people, to rebuild faith in Christ, to bring you back to Him, to fill you with Joy and Enthusiasm again, to strengthen your tired knees, to lift up your voice in Praise. God has not abandoned us; He is right here this morning at the Altar, waiting to meet you, to feed you with the Blessed Sacrament, to fill you with His Grace. The Lord has never abandoned us, and He still wants to build His Kingdom right here, right now.

So put aside the discouragement, lift up your heads, proclaim in your heart that “Jesus is your Lord”—know that He intends to use you to change this world into His Kingdom—it'll be a hard slow process, but in the end, the Bible says we win.

So Come Holy Spirit--- fill your people this morning and let us see what miracles the Lord can do with our tired old bones.

[End by humming, then singing the chorus: “Dem bones, dem bones, dem dry bones now hear the Word of the Lord.”]

In the name of the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit, Amen