

# 6th Sunday - I have overcome the world

## Salutation

We celebrate today three Feasts of the Lord and you can see the icons for them

Blessed Feast to you all

## Background

The Church arranges for us the readings of the Holy 50 Days about our new life in the Lord Jesus Christ who is risen from the dead. The Lord Jesus in His incarnation, crucifixion, death, burial, resurrection and ascension, did all of this for our sake. In order to give us a new life - a life free from the slavery of sin, slavery to the world, and slavery to Satan. A life in the Lord Jesus Christ.

- In the 1st week, the Lord confirms the faith of the disciples and reveals to them with Thomas, His Resurrection
- In the 2nd week, the Lord tells us I am the Bread of Life - he who eats shall never hunger
- In the 3rd week, the Lord is the One who gives us the everlasting water - the Holy Spirit - he who drinks shall never thirst
- In the 4th week, I am the Light of the World - that whoever believes in Him shall not abide in darkness
- In the 5th week, I am the Way, the Truth and the Life - that through Him we go to the Father.
- So in this new life, we will not hunger or thirst, we will abide in Light, we are united to the Lord Jesus and through Him come to the Father.
- Then, this past week on Thursday, we celebrated the Feast of the Ascension. Abouna gave us three points last night about the Ascension and why the Lord ascended.

## Introduction

Now it is the 6th Sunday and the gospel ended with the Lord telling His disciples: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world" (John 16:33)

These verses are actually the end of the final discourse the Lord has with His disciples. After the Lord washed the feet of the disciples, and they ate the Last Supper, the Lord starts to speak to

them and tell them about the Father, and about the Holy Spirit. He gives them warnings of what is to come - "the world will hate you but it hated Me first" - "they will put you out of the synagogues" - "they will kill you" - and He gives them a message of hope that they will have joy.

The conclusion of this whole message is the verse that we ended with today: "These things I have spoken to you, that in Me you may have peace. In the world you will have tribulation; but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world."

## Tribulations

We will have tribulations. That's guaranteed. And they will take different forms:

- I might be rejected from a job or an internship or a specific school
- I might have financial trouble
- I might get in arguments with my spouse
- I might have children that are straying away, or who don't listen
- I might have parents who don't understand me
- I might get sick
- I might have a sick family member
- I might struggle with a sin
- I might struggle with an addiction - to drugs or alcohol, to social media, to my phone, to pornography, etc.
- I might struggle to make friends
- I might have friends that take me down a wrong path
- I might be persecuted
  - Many of us think the time of persecution is over... that was something that happened in the old days a thousand or two thousand years ago. Or we think the place of persecution is far away - now we are in the USA with freedom of religion, and modern Western Society... When we think of tribulations, sometimes we think of the stories of the martyrs: the tortures, the rulers who tried to tempt them. Or we may think of more modern history of the tribulations faced in Islamic countries: not able to practice your faith freely, or having limitations in social life because of your faith.
  - But we have persecutions in this country and in this day and age. If I'm not conforming to the ideologies of the world - homosexuality, transgenderism, abortion, marijuana, sports gambling... I may be discriminated against, or I may be called extremist or homophobe or transphobic or anti-women or any other such names. This is the modern day persecution, and it is one of the tribulations we WILL face.
- I might have easy access to sin
  - It used to be difficult to cheat, not worth the effort - now I can just type my class prompt in ChatGPT and be done with the assignment, and I think no one will notice.
  - It used to be difficult to gamble, especially if you are underage - now I can just download an app on my phone.
  - It used to be difficult to look at explicit media - now it's in every Movie, TV Show, Advertisement and App.
  - It used to be difficult to get into drug use - now it's handed out in schools by peers.
  - This easy access to sin in our modern society is one of the tribulations that we face.

All of these tribulations and many more might come upon me. And the Lord told us "In the world you will have tribulation." These tribulations come to those who are Christians (believers) and also to those who are non-believers. But what is different is HOW we deal with those tribulations.

The Lord told us today: "Be of good cheer, I have overcome the world"

## His Victory is My Victory

I have overcome the world - I have triumphed - I am victorious.

But what does that mean? In the world you will have tribulation, but be of good cheer, I have overcome the world.

Imagine if a teacher went to his students and said "look, the exam is very very hard... but don't worry, be of good cheer, I passed the exam." What might the student say? Okay you passed the exam... so what? I'm the one who has to take it, how does that help me?

The answer comes to us in today's Pauline Epistle. The first verse in the Pauline Epistle today: "But thanks be to God, who gives us the victory through our Lord Jesus Christ." (1 Corinthians 15:57)

When the Lord says "I have overcome the world" - "I have victory over the world" - we can take that to be our victory, as St Paul told us. When the Lord Jesus Christ conquers, then WE conquer - because we are IN the Lord Jesus Christ. We are UNITED with the Lord Jesus Christ. We ABIDE in Him and He in us.

In the last five weeks, we had message about our new life in Christ and today we see what that means. His victory is our victory.

How do we abide in Him? How do we unite with Him?

### In the Sacraments

- In Baptism, we "take off the old man and put on the new and superior one" ( ) - St Paul says (Ephesians 4) And we are putting on Christ (Romans 13)
- In Confirmation, we receive His Spirit to dwell in us
- In Repentance & Confession, we are transformed and renewed and our sins are forgiven
- In the Eucharist, we eat His Body and His Blood and we "abide in Him and He in us."

### In a Personal Relationship with Him

- In Prayer
  - "Draw near to God and He will draw near to you." (James 4:8)
  - Prayer is the relationship with God
- In Scripture
  - "Sanctify them by Your truth. Your word is truth." (John 17:17)
  - "Now you are clean through the word which I have spoken to you."

So when we live the sacramental life, and strive in our spiritual life - prayer, scripture, fasting, prostrations, spiritual books, spiritual canon; we are united with the Lord, we abide in Him and He in us, and in this way, we share in His victory, and we can overcome the world.

## That in Me you may have peace

"These things I have spoken to you that in Me you may have peace." (John 16:33)

This is a very important concept - that in Me you may have peace. Overcome the tribulation doesn't mean that it will end. The tribulation may never end. It might - but it might not.

But at the very least, the Lord wants us to have peace in tribulation. And He spoke these words to the disciples, in order that they would have peace when the tribulation came (of His death and waiting for His Resurrection).

So how does the Lord equip us to overcome tribulation? How does the Lord equip us to endure tribulation when we have His peace?

We'll discuss 4 points

### 1. The Lord Gives Us His Joy

One of the ways that the Lord equips us to overcome tribulation is by giving us His Joy.

In the Catholic Epistle today, St Peter writes "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials." (1 Peter 1:6)

We read in Nehemiah that "Do not sorrow, for the joy of the Lord is your strength." (Nehemiah 8:10)

The person who has the joy of the Lord, is strong and is able to conquer. You meet some people like that who are always joyful despite anything that's going on.

We remember when St Paul and Silas were imprisoned in Philippi and not just imprisoned, but they were beaten with rods and laid with stripes and then their feet were put in stocks (see image). What do we read in the Book of Acts?

- <sup>25</sup> But at midnight Paul and Silas were praying and singing hymns to God, and the prisoners were listening to them. <sup>26</sup> Suddenly there was a great earthquake, so that the foundations of the prison were shaken; and immediately all the doors were opened and everyone's chains were loosed. <sup>27</sup> And the keeper of the prison, awaking from sleep and seeing the prison doors open, supposing the prisoners had fled, drew his sword and was about to kill himself. <sup>28</sup> But Paul called with a loud voice, saying, "Do yourself no harm, for we are all here."

Despite their tortures and beatings, Paul and Silas had peace. And they overcame their tribulation by praying and singing hymns. They were joyful! They were not complaining, they were not afraid -

and when their chains were loosened and the door opened, they didn't run out and try to escape. No, they had peace. Actually, the one who didn't have peace was the jailer - and he was going to kill himself. But they comforted him and he asked what must I do to be saved, and he was saved.

So because of the peace of Christ, they overcame the tribulation. They were not weighed down by being in prison, or dismayed, or afraid. But they were in peace.

Maybe, for example, I am struggling with a family member who is ill. Let me put it my struggle in the hands of the Lord, and as I live the sacramental life and continue in my spiritual life, and pray and sing hymns with joy, the Lord will give me peace to endure and overcome the tribulation.

## 2. The Lord Gives Us Purpose

One of the ways that the Lord equips us to overcome tribulation is by giving us Purpose. God is the One who created us, so He is the only One who can give us Purpose.

We remember the story of the righteous Joseph in the Book of Genesis. Joseph is thrown in a pit and then sold to slavery by his brothers. Then he is falsely accused in Potiphar's house and sent to jail for several years. Finally he comes out of jail and interprets Pharaoh's dreams, and we know the rest of the story. He becomes second in command over all of Egypt. His brothers, feeling guilty, were afraid that he would retaliate against them - and this is a tribulation. But Joseph understood his purpose. He said to them: "You meant evil against me; but God meant it for good, in order to bring it about as it is this day, to save many people alive." (Genesis 50:20)

He understood how God had used his tribulation for the safety of his family, and all the land of Egypt and the surrounding lands. He understood how God was using him.

Have you heard about Nick Vujicic? He was born without arms and legs. But we don't see him in despair, we don't see him complaining about his arms or legs. But the tribulation gave him a sense of purpose - he can walk, swim, answer the phone, type and do many things and he goes around preaching Christianity to people. He goes around speaking out against the ideologies of the world like abortion. And he has overcome the tribulation. Did his arms and legs grow back? No, but he overcomes the tribulation with his sense of purpose.

We read in Proverbs: "Trust in the Lord with all your heart, and lean not on your own understanding; in all your ways acknowledge Him, and He shall direct your paths." (Proverbs 3:5-6)

The Lord may reveal to us His will, our purpose through a tribulation, and this will give us peace to overcome the tribulation.

## 3. The Lord Gives Us Faith & Hope

In the Catholic Epistle today, St Peter writes "In this you greatly rejoice, though now for a little while, if need be, you have been grieved by various trials, that the genuineness of your faith, being much more precious than gold that perishes, though it is tested by fire, may be found to praise, honor and glory at the revelation of Christ." (1 Peter 1:6)

We remember the story of Abraham - Abraham suffered much tribulation in his life. For a long time, he and Sarah his wife were not able to bear children, but the Lord made a covenant with him that he would have descendants like the stars of heaven. And it was 30 years after that, that he had Isaac. So he endured this tribulation for 30 years. How? Faith. Faith and hope in the promises of God.

Then finally after Isaac is born, the Lord gives Abraham another tribulation - take your son Isaac, your only son whom you love, and offer him up to me as a burnt offering on the mountain of which I tell you. How did Abraham endure this tribulation? How did he take his son and go on a three day journey knowing where he was going and what he was going to do there? Again, with faith. St Paul tells us: "By faith Abraham, when he was tested, offered up Isaac, and he who had received the promises offered up his only begotten son, of whom it was said, "In Isaac your seed shall be called," concluding that God was able to raise him up, even from the dead." (Hebrews 11:17-19)

Abraham had faith that God would raise Isaac from the dead. And this faith is what allowed him to endure the tribulation.

When there is a tribulation that is out of my hands completely - an illness, a natural disaster, etc. then I have no choice but to have faith in the Lord and in His wisdom and to pray that His will be done. The Lord gives me faith as a way to overcome tribulation. And by faith, I will have peace.

## 4. The Lord Gives Us Repentance

Finally, the Lord gives us repentance. I can overcome tribulation by repentance. Throughout the Old Testament, we saw this happening with Israel - they reject God, they are taken under tribulation by another nation, they repent, God delivers them. It's a cycle in the Book of Judges and throughout the books of the Kings.

An example of this repentance is King Manasseh. King Manasseh was one of the very evil kings, he did not walk in the way of his father the righteous King Hezekiah. He undid all of the good things his father had done - he built idols and altars for Baal and every evil thing that could have been done.

So the Lord brought a tribulation on Manasseh - the Assyrians came and they took him with hooks, bound him with bronze fetters and carried him captive to Babylon.

"Now when Manasseh was in affliction, he implored the Lord his God, and humbled himself greatly before the God of his fathers, and prayed to Him; and He received his entreaty, heard his supplication, and brought him back to Jerusalem into his kingdom. Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God." (2 Chronicles 33:12-13)

How did Manasseh endure the temptation of being in captivity? By repentance. And when he repented of all his sin, then he found peace and the scripture says "Then Manasseh knew that the Lord was God."

One of the ways to overcome tribulation in the world is by living a life of repentance.

Some tribulations are a direct result of our own sin - self-inflicted suffering. If I am trapped in a habit, a lifestyle, a relationship or a friendship that is keeping me far from God. The simple way out is repentance.

Other times, we might be facing a tribulation and we don't realize that God is trying to get my attention! I might say "I can't find a job!" and that's a real tribulation. But maybe at the same time, I am involved in a relationship that I know is not blessed. Maybe the Lord is using the tribulation of the job to guide me out of the sin of the relationship. Maybe the Lord is waiting for my repentance to deliver me.

There is no blessing in living a life of sin. And there is no peace without repentance.

If I choose to live the life of repentance, then I will be reconciled with God and I will have the peace of the Lord Jesus Christ, and I will be able to endure and overcome the tribulations.

## Summary

The Lord said to us today "In the world you will have tribulation. But be of good cheer, I have overcome the world." When we live a Sacramental Life, a life of Prayer, and a life of reading the Scripture, then we will be united with the Lord, abiding in Him. And so His victory over the world becomes our victory.

Being united with Him will give us peace. He equips us with joy, purpose, faith, and repentance to **overcome the world**.

## Concluding Prayer

May the Lord grant us to have peace in Him and to "be of good cheer" in the joy of His Glorious Resurrection and His Ascension into the Heavens, and may we conquer the tribulations of this world with Him, in Him and through Him.

Glory be to God, forever. Amen.

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