

Homily for 29th Sunday in Ordinary Time

It was exactly twenty minutes before nine in the morning. It was twenty minutes before the wedding was to take place. The table was set and the house was decorated. All was ready. She was putting on her wedding dress when, twenty minutes before nine, she received a letter from her fiancé telling her that the wedding was canceled.

At that precise moment, the woman went around her large house and stopped all the clocks... forever sealing them at twenty minutes before nine. She sealed up every window of her house. The table remained set for the wedding dinner. The wedding dress not ever taken off. Never again would she leave her family's dark and dusky Gothic mansion. For the next thirty years, she would insulate herself in her pain, become hardened to the needs of others and imprisoned in the moment of a horrible experience.

Her name was Mrs. Havisham and she is one of the central characters in Charles Dickens' famous novel, "Great Expectations."

I rather think that the judge in today's Gospel is like Mrs. Havisham. Jesus tells us that he is a man who "neither feared God nor respected any human being." Imprisoned in himself, he could care less about the cries of this poor widow who desperately needs his help.

Perhaps life has been unkind to him. Perhaps he is bitter over a lost love or is disappointed that he “didn’t get further” in life.

There is, I think, a temptation to become a little bit or a lot like the character of the judge or of Mrs. Havisham. How many of us become mired in disappointment and heartbreak? How many of us are imprisoned in a moment of great regret where we only feel the pain of loss? How easy it is to think God careless of our needs? How easy to refuse to believe that God has something else in mind for us?

We must never allow our hearts to become hardened by the terrors and disappointments of life. It only serves to isolate us from others and ultimately from God.

God knows our frustrations and our hurts, our fears and our confusions. God is faithful...this is the message of the Gospel. We must never “lose heart.” God is at work in our lives. This is the faith that carries us through life. This is the faith we profess every Sunday as we gather as God’s faithful people. This is the faith that the Son of God will look for when he comes in glory to bring us home.