



Immaculate Conception
Church

Homily for the 14th Sunday in Ordinary Time
Year A 2014

I try to make a habit of reading the requests for prayer that people write down in the book in front of the statue of Mary. I then make an effort to integrate those intentions into my own prayer life.

Last week I looked down on the open page and found these intentions: "Please pray for me I am going through a hard time." "Please heal me." "Please take care of my children." In these words I found people going through pain, anxiety and frustration. And they are not alone. There are many people in our parish, in our city and in our state who cry out with the same kind of prayers.

On this weekend when we celebrate the gift of our country, the freedom that we enjoy and the opportunities that are given to us, we are all conscious that there are many who struggle amid an economy that is, at best, fragile and a work atmosphere that is challenging.

The people in the first reading today would understand the feelings of those who struggle in today's world. These were people who were vanquished. Their lives were destroyed. They were strangers in a strange land. They also struggled in their day-to-day life. In the midst of all this anguish, the prophet Zechariah cried out and reminded his listeners that God would not abandon them. He was telling them to "hold tight" because God will never desert the people God loves so much.

And the words of the Gospel also speak to us. "Come to me...all who are burdened." Faith teaches us that Christ walks with us and carries us in those difficult moments that bring us to the brink of despair. Christ is saying to us: "Trust in me. I will lead you through this valley of darkness and of fear."

The problems that we face as individuals and often as a nation reflect the character of our country at this time in history. While we have celebrated our country this weekend with both pride and hope, we should be clear that it is prayer and the action of God in our lives that is the most important element of our Fourth of July celebration.

We pray for those who have no work. May they find just labor soon. We pray for those who struggle and who live in fear because they do not know where to turn. May the light of God's love direct their efforts and guide their actions. We pray for our country which seems to struggle in its efforts to become a beacon of hope. May God bless our nation. May God bless our leaders. May God bless all of us who dwell in this great land. May we never take it for granted. May we realize that no matter what our struggles we are all one. And together we seek God's guidance in our future and the future of our country.