

## 6th Sunday in Ordinary Time

**“I got this” is a meme that expresses self-confidence and reassures others that the speaker can handle this difficult situation. Its popularity shows how our culture values individual achievement amid adversity. “I got this” presumes we live in a world of conflict, a world that demands victory and detests failure. It believes that success begins with a pep talk we give ourselves and a motto we declare in public so that others hold us to the vow we have made. It is a useful technique for establishing personal goals.**

**Yet, we sometimes go too far down this path. When we do achieve personal goals, we start to think that we can do it all. We become not self-confident, but overconfident. We put too much pressure on ourselves, and then we have to deal with failure, the very result we were trying to avoid. Some people admit they rely so much on themselves that they do not trust enough in God. Now, trusting in God may not bring the particular success they were hoping to achieve on their own, but it can equip them to handle the ups and downs of life more easily.**

**As we turn the pages of Luke’s gospel this year, we encounter today his equivalent to the more famous Beatitudes we know from Matthew. Luke gives four instead of eight, and he follows them with four woes that befall people. Because of this contrast between the blessed life and the woeful life, the lectionary gives us a first reading from the prophet Jeremiah, who made a similar distinction between those who trust in God and those who do not. The first group has blessings; the second group has woes. Jeremiah faced a political situation where the leaders of Judah said they trusted in God, but built up their armies anyway. They told others, “God has this,” but each of them acted like, “I got this.” And, they lost. They lost it all.**

**Jeremiah uses foliage to make his point. On one hand, “like a barren bush in the desert that... stands in a lava waste, a salt and empty earth,” you have the person “who trusts in human beings, who seeks his strength in flesh, whose heart turns away from the Lord.” On the other hand, “like a tree planted beside the waters that stretches out its roots to the stream,” is the person “who trusts in the Lord, whose hope is the Lord.” That green tree still faces a difficult future. Jeremiah says heat will come, drought may last a year. But in those times, such a tree fears not and “shows no distress, but still bears fruit.” It may not be as beautiful as the fruit of fairer weather, but it will survive and contribute.**

**We’re all going to face times when it is hard to trust in God. We reflect on achievements we have made in the past, and we believe we can accomplish even more in the future. We may become obsessed with our own abilities. We may be tempted to abandon daily prayer; to devote less time to spouse, family and a neighbor in need; and to spend our resources on ourselves rather than on charities. Like ancient Judah building up its armies instead of its religious practices, each of us thinks, “I got this.” And we may fall far. But if we remain faithful to a plan of life, to the people we love, and to trust that God will see us through, we will not fear the heat of conflict or the drought of personal loss. When we trust God, even in times of stress, our leaves will stay green; we will bear fruit.**

Sunday, February 13, 2022