

Wednesday of the 16th Week of the Year
July 20, 2011 8:30am

If only I had studied harder!
If only I had spent more time with my parents!
What if the new job doesn't work out!
What if I get sick working around those people at the homeless shelter!

Sometimes we may say or think these if-onlys and what-ifs.
The problem is that the if-onlys and the what-ifs can really trap us.
They can cause us to grumble and complain and dwell on the negative.

This is what happens with the Israelites in our first readings this week.
They had escaped from slavery in Egypt but then the Egyptians were pursuing them.
So they start grumbling.
"If only we had stayed in Egypt, we wouldn't die at their hands in the desert."
Or today they are grumbling again because they don't have enough food.
So, "If only we had stayed in Egypt, we would have had at least something to eat."
There's no place for a burger and a cold beer!

And eventually they were also into the what-ifs.
What if we don't take the right route to the Promised Land!
What if life there turns out to be just as hard as it was in Egypt!

Sometimes the if-onlys and the what-ifs can move us to be sorry for our sins of the past or to dream dreams for the future.
And that is good.
But often the if-onlys and the what-ifs just paralyze us.
The if-onlys fill us with regret about the past and the what-ifs fill us with anxiety about the future.
They can cause us, like the Israelites, to grumble and be negative.
Instead of them, Jesus calls us to live and be trusting in the present.
He calls us to trust that God will forgive us of past mistakes and that God will be with us today and in the future.
And so, we are called to see how God is present to us right now and what God wants us to do right now and find our peace in this.
This approach enables us to live positively with God in the present.