

## Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time C/2010

Everybody wants to be happy. We all want to be happy. For that reason, we do many things in our lives in order to be happy. But the paths we choose to attain that happiness are different and varied from one person to another. By the end of the day, we realize sometimes that in what we have done, we had a lot of fun, but for all that we are not happy. At times we realize that in what we have achieved, we had great moments of joy and pleasure, but for all that we are not happy.

Such an observation shows us that happiness is more than fun, more than pleasure, more than simple joy. Would not happiness be a state of mind or a state of being that lies in the way we deal with the things of this world? Would not happiness be achieved even when someone has less in his life, or when someone is in pain or suffering? After all, what is true happiness? Where can it be found? Today's readings try to answer these questions by highlighting the spiritual way that leads to true happiness.

In the first reading, the prophet Jeremiah shows that there is a profound difference between one who trusts in man and one who trusts in God. The resources of one who trusts in man are wholly humanistic and, therefore, are fragile and short-lived. On the contrary, the resources of one who trusts in God are solid and enduring. Such a man is like a fruitful tree planted beside water. Its roots stretch out deep in the stream; it fears no drought or the heat; it is always green. It bears much fruit, because the stream continually irrigates it and nourishes it.

What is behind this comparison is the idea that true happiness is that whose foundation is God. The one who trusts in the Lord is happy, indeed, because when all other human foundations scramble, he will not be left alone. He is sure that God will be at his side forever. With all this, Jeremiah is not calling us to distrust people in our relationships with one another. Rather, he wants us to be aware of the fact that the human condition is fragile and unstable. It is better for us to found our happiness and the meaning of our lives in God, who is the source of life everlasting.

The idea of everlasting life commands also the letter of St Paul to the Corinthians. St Paul comes to this idea in response to those among the Corinthians who doubted the resurrection of Jesus. He insists that if the resurrection of Jesus was not a fact, then, the whole Christian message was based on a lie and our own faith has no foundation at all. It means also that thousands and thousands of people have died trusting in a delusion.

And yet, Christ is risen from the dead as the first fruit of those who have fallen asleep. Like a first fruit that gives the taste and the quality of all the fruits that are on a tree, Jesus' resurrection is the measure of what we hope for in the life after death.

One of the consequences to draw from such reasoning is quite simple: Given that the resurrection of Jesus is true, we will rise with Christ. What we actually do here, in this world, is like a preparation for the life of the world to come. Not that the present world loses its importance, rather it has to be considered as leading to the fullness of time where we will share in the resurrection of Jesus. It is there that our true happiness is.

All that helps us understand what is at stake in today's Gospel as Jesus is talking about the beatitudes. First of all, Jesus shows that there are two ways open to each person and from which one has to choose, one for happiness and the other for curse.

The criteria Jesus sets for happiness are completely the opposite of human standards we are used to. Access to happiness depends on how we choose God and put him above anything else. It can lead us to the point of accepting hunger, tears, hatred, insult and rejection for the sake of God's kingdom, at the example of the prophets and the martyrs of the past.

In this context, the disciples are blessed because they have understood that happiness does not necessarily depend on material possession, neither on having plenty nor being without problems. They are happy, because, in spite of evident situations of poverty, hunger, suffering, hatred and rejection, they still trust God. They know that nothing of all that will last forever, because God's plan of salvation goes beyond this world.

It is also true that poverty, hunger, weeping, or suffering is not in itself an ideal. These things are diminishing conditions that should be changed. However, when we live these conditions with God, they can pave the way to happiness. God can always change poverty into riches, hunger into satisfaction, weeping into laughing, and suffering into joy.

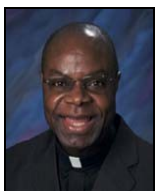
The other people are cursed, because they have not understood the importance of God and the change he wants them to operate in their lives. Living in the moment, they think that their present situation of fortune, plenty, laughs and fame, is all that counts to make them happy. And yet, God plays a big part in our search for happiness.

All this shows us that the beatitudes have a double character of appeal and challenge. First of all, they appeal to our humanity so that we change the situation of poverty, hunger and suffering in the world, as an anticipation of God's kingdom on earth. At the same time, they challenge us so that when we are confronted with our own situation of poverty, suffering, rejection and insult, we are convinced that we are at the good side of history. Jesus will not leave us alone or without reward.

The last thing to say is that human experience has taught us that human desires are never fully satisfied. In such a context, a happy person is one who trusts and hopes for more to come. Happiness that is present is beautiful, but always raises the question of tomorrow. Moreover, no one is happy alone. Our hope for happiness in the present and the future has to do also with others. Think about it.

Let us pray that in our search for happiness, we do not forget God who is the source of true and everlasting happiness. May God help us to use our present situation in the world as preparation for our eternal life! God bless you all.

**Jeremiah 17, 5-8; 1 Corinthians 15, 12, 16-20; Luke 6, 17, 20-26**



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