

Sixth Sunday in Ordinary Time (C) 2022

This is Jesus' first big sermon in the Gospel of Luke. His inaugural address. And it's **shocking**.

The topic is happiness (being blessed), and in a total **reversal of ordinary standards**, Jesus links true happiness with struggle, hardship, suffering and opposition, not with the prosperity, popularity, and pleasure that we normally associate with happiness.

What does he mean by this?

Jesus isn't saying that the good things of life are evil - not at all.

- They are God's gifts and we are meant to enjoy them. But he is saying that **they cannot satisfy** our desire for happiness.
- And so, if we put our trust in them, as Jeremiah says in the first reading, our lives will wither and harden, like **tumbleweeds** in the desert. No roots, and no fruits.

Rather, Jesus is teaching us that the **true path to happiness** in this fallen world is paved with life's challenges and hardships.

- These **remind** us that this world is passing and imperfect, that the only **dependable** thing in life is our friendship with God.
- Hardships and challenges teach us to **root** our lives in the **rich soil** of knowing, loving, and serving him; then our lives will be like a flourishing tree, with strong roots and luscious fruits.

This lesson has to be **re-learned continually**. Because of our fallen nature, we always tend to think we can **find heaven on earth** by putting together just the right combination of possessions, praise, and power. But we can't, as our Lord makes perfectly clear.

We are members of the Church militant for as long as we journey here on earth, and that means we need to keep our armor on and our supply lines protected, lest we fall into the enemy's traps.

#1723 The beatitude we are promised confronts us with decisive moral choices. It invites us to purify our hearts of bad instincts and to seek the love of God above all else. It teaches us that true happiness is not found in riches or well-being, in human fame or power, or in any human achievement - however beneficial it may be - such as science, technology, and art, or indeed in any creature, but in God alone, the source of every good and of all love...

#45 Man is made to live in communion with God in whom he finds happiness.

It takes **faith** to accept this teaching of Christ. Faith is for our **Christian** lives what natural intelligence is for our **natural** lives.

We received natural intelligence when we were given life. It enables us to know, understand, and learn things about the world around us. It enables us to write poems and read books, unlike animals and plants, which don't have this kind of intelligence.

When we were baptized, God gave a **new** kind of intelligence - faith. This enables us to **see things from God's perspective**. Faith allows us to perceive God's **love** behind the beauty of a sunset, God's **presence** in the Eucharist, God's **wisdom** at work in suffering.

And just as we need to exercise our natural intelligence if we want it to **grow and mature**, we have to exercise this gift of faith too.

- The **hardships of every day** are the best opportunities to exercise our faith. When things go our way, we don't have to exercise faith to accept them - natural intelligence is enough. When they **don't** go our way, then natural intelligence is **not** enough. We

have to say: I don't know where you're taking me, Lord, but I know you're still in charge. [Here you can make reference to the illustration you used...]

- Sickness, betrayal, accidents, money problems, rejection, being made fun of because of our Christian standards - these things make us **blessed**, because in them we can exercise our faith in Christ. They make us **more like Christ**, who **saved** us by **suffering** all these things himself.

In this Mass, then, let's **renew our faith**. Let's remind ourselves that **earth is not heaven**. Let's ask Jesus to teach us to live by this supernatural intelligence, so that it can be a **sturdy lighthouse** guiding us along this earthly road heaven. Lord, increase our faith!

Let us remember the words of Mother Teresa: A sacrifice to be real must cost, must hurt, must empty ourselves. Give yourself fully to God. He will use you to accomplish great things on the condition that you believe much more in His LOVE than in your weakness. The fruit of silence is prayer, the fruit of prayer is faith, the fruit of faith is love, the fruit of love is service, the fruit of service is peace.