

Homily

18th Sunday in Ordinary Time

August 2, 2020

An Englishman, a Frenchman, and a Russian were in a bar talking about happiness.

The Englishman said, “Happiness is a hard ride on a good stead hunting a fox across the countryside then sitting around the fire at the end of the day with family and friends recounting the chase.”

The Frenchman said, “No, happiness is a romantic dinner with your beautiful bride followed by an intimate evening in front of a roaring fire and a glass of wine.”

The Russian said, “No, happiness is coming home after a long, hard day at the factory sitting with my boy on my knee, a vodka in my hand and my wife at my side. There comes a knock at the door followed by three men in uniform holding guns asking me if I’m Ivan Stanovich. I point and say, ‘he lives upstairs.’ That’s true happiness.”

What makes you happy? Me? I like a good meal and spending time with my wife and family. Some people like sports, both playing and watching. Some people like shopping or cooking. Some like drinking or gambling.

There are all types of ways we are happy. God wants us to be happy. That’s why He made us, to be happy – with Him and all the angels and saints. And to be happy on this earth, with each other and with all creation.

Happiness isn’t something that just happens. It’s a choice. I choose to be happy or not. When things happen, good or bad, I have a choice how to respond. That’s how Free Will works. That’s how God made us, free to choose.

But God didn’t leave us on our own. He didn’t spin the universe and walk away. He’s here with us every step of the way. Yes, we have Free Will to choose to be happy or not, to choose right from wrong, to choose evil or good. But He helps us along the way.

In Isaiah today, God invites us, provides for us, “All you who are thirsty, come to the water! You who have no money, come, receive grain and eat; Come, without paying and without cost, drink wine and milk!

In the Responsorial Psalm, we are told, “The hand of the Lord feeds us; he answers all our needs.”

In the second reading, we are told that, no matter what, we cannot be separated from God’s love. He’s with us here, now and always.

And He always provides for us. In today's Gospel, we hear of the crowds following Jesus. And not just following Him but leaving everything else behind to a deserted place where they had no food.

That's hard to imagine today. There aren't many places you can go and not find food. But think about it; 5000 men, plus women and children – most of those men had wives and most of these couples had children, probably several.

Not only are we asked to imagine a place where 25 thousand people, probably more, are gathered to see and hear one Man, but that they came without regard for how to feed themselves. They are totally focused on Jesus. And Jesus doesn't disappoint.

They followed Him because He cured them and preached to them the Good News. They believed He would take care of them. And He did.

And He did it with the help of his Apostles. He told them to feed them themselves. But, as usual, the apostles didn't think they could. So, Jesus shows them how.

Fast forward 2000 years. We have the benefit of knowing the outcome. We didn't see it happen, but we know. Jesus cured illness, gave sight to the blind, hearing to the deaf, expelled evil spirits, raised the dead. But that was 2000 years ago.

Well, nothings changed. Jesus is still here with us. And He has given us even more; the Sacraments. And Peter and his successors to lead us. And the saints to intercede for us. We are all in this together.

So, what makes you happy?

We choose to be happy. We also choose what makes us happy. What happiness is for you is going to be different than happiness for someone else, and that's okay. God made us unique. God have us different gifts. And when we choose to use those gifts for the benefit of each other, that is when we are the happiest and that is what God wants for us.

In this crazy world with rioting, disease, crime and dissent, we still have a choice. Look at all of history. We have always had rioting, disease, crime and dissent. Yes, we will always have the poor and the lonely, those who need food and clothing and those who have everything they need. But what makes us different as human beings, as the creation of our heavenly Father, is the Free Will to choose to be happy. We make the choice. And God will always provide.

This week, when you watch the news about crime or hear another horrible story about man's inhumanity toward man, remember each of us are children of God, the brother of our Lord Jesus Christ and endowed with the many gifts blessed by the Holy Spirit. Then think about what makes you happy and what will make God happy. When they are in alignment, God will return the favor overflowing and with leftovers.