

Homily
Memorial of St. Philip Neri, Priest
May 26, 2023

Who's happy? Why are you happy? What are some other reasons to be happy?

As Christians, we have a very real reason to be happy; God so loved the world that He gave His only Son. Jesus became one of us in all ways but sin. Jesus died on the cross, defeated death, rose again and is now seated at the right hand of God. We get to come to Mass to receive Jesus in the Word proclaimed and in the Sacrament we are all about to receive. These are real and true reasons to be happy.

What makes us happy? We make ourselves happy because we decide to be happy. Happiness is a decision. Sometimes things happen that make it hard to be happy, but the decision is still ours.

What makes us sad? Can we find happiness in a sad situation? The choice is still ours.

Today we celebrate St. Philip Neri. Who knows who this is? St. Philip Neri was a priest in Italy 500 years ago. God graced him with a gift of a heart on fire with love. He was known for his joy and love for others. He did many great things before he became a priest and then he did many great things after he became a priest. He was a true disciple of Christ. He said:

“Cheerfulness strengthens the heart and helps us to persevere. A servant of God ought always to be in good spirits. Charity and cheerfulness, ..., should be our motto.”

– St. Philip Neri

In today's Gospel, Jesus asks Peter if he loves Him. Three times He asks Peter if Peter loves Him. Why do you think Jesus asked Peter three times? Jesus loves Peter and wants Peter to lead God's people after He is gone. Jesus needs Peter to know that He forgives him, that he is forgiven. That brings joy, knowing we are forgiven.

Sometimes we make mistakes. God still loves us and wants us to be happy. That is why God gave us the priests to hear our confession and give us absolution so we know He forgives us and loves us. And that makes us happy. We aren't happy when we make mistakes, but we learn from our mistakes and that makes us better and that makes us happy.

Sometimes we are tempted. Who knows what Temptation is? God still loves us and wants us to be happy. And the angels rejoice when we fight off temptation and we are happy that we avoided sin. We want to obey God. We are happiest when we are obedient because God knows what we need and wants what is best for us; He knows what is best for us. That is why we align our will to His. And we are happy.

The choice is ours. We choose to be happy. And we are happiest when we obey God, do what is right, avoid what is bad and fight against temptation. The choice is ours. Have a great summer vacation and choose to be happy!