

# Sermon

- ◆ **First Reading:** *Isaiah 61:1-2, 10-11*
- ◆ **Second Reading:** *1 Thessalonians 5:16-24*
- ◆ **Gospel:** *John 1:6-8, 19-28*

Now we are into the third Sunday of Advent, referred to as Gaudete Sunday, the Sunday in which to rejoice because the Lord's birthday is getting closer ; the opening antiphon of the Mass is **REJOICE IN THE LORD ALWAYS, AGAIN I SAY REJOICE. INDEED THE LORD IS NEAR..**

IF I went into central London on a cold winter evening and said to homeless people "rejoice in the Lord always", I wonder what sort of reaction I'd receive, I may be told in no uncertain terms what to do with myself, I don't know why I mentioned that. Then along comes st.Paul in the 2<sup>nd</sup> reading telling the Christians of Thessalonika to **BE HAPPY AT ALL TIMES, PRAY CONSTANTLY, AND FOR ALL THINGS GIVE THANKS TO GOD .....**

But I've never met anyone who is happy "at all times", matter of fact, I consider myself a happy person, but certainly not at all times . There must be some secret to it. I used to think that rich people with high social status were the "happiest" people in the world, at least that's how it always looked, only to discover that my assessment was completely wrong, for example, Elvis Presley, after turning 40, was a very wealthy man, with his own mansion, his own jet, a fleet of cars, motorbikes and 5 bank accounts, Gosh!!, but he was unhappy. Elvis survived on drugs and comfort food, he couldn't accept that his type of music and song was rapidly diminishing ; sadly he was found dead at his home in Memphis, August 1977. Others of outstanding talent with a lot going for them drank themselves to death. So how can anyone "**BE HAPPY AT ALL TIMES**"? whatever about "at all times", but I believe there is a little corner of happiness for all of us to be discovered, it depends on how we go in search of it ; observe what st.Paul says immediately after his instruction on being happy at all times, **PRAY CONSTANTLY and FOR ALL THINGS GIVE THANKS TO GOD ;**

now we're onto something good here ; prayer and thanksgiving seem to make an excellent mixture ; There's a lot to be said about having daily regular prayer in our lives, therefore we remain conscious of the Divine Presence ; this can only lead to an attitude of thanksgiving in ourselves ; haven't you ever enjoyed something so much that at the end of the day you couldn't but express gratitude to God for what you had enjoyed? ; I know people and they perceive the flow of their lives as one blessing after another ; the more gratitude they express, the more blessings come their way ; these are happy people because they know their lives depend on God for everything, and they are not well-off nor do they seek to be the "centre-of-the-universe" ; Did God intend us to be happy? Of course He did, certainly we weren't created to be miserable, but look at all the misery we impose on each other and on Mother Nature!!! Ultimately each of us has to work towards our own corner of happiness, it's an IN-SIDE JOB !! What does that mean? it means that happiness is not "OUT THERE SOMEWHERE", rather we have to discover it for ourselves FROM WITHIN ; also we must not equate continuous pleasure nor temporary joys with happiness ; there's another way of putting it, many years ago I heard someone say "WHAT-EVER YOU ARE LOOKING FOR IN LIFE, YOU WON'T GET IT FROM PEOPLE, PLACES nor THINGS", this is a very profound piece of truth and worth reflecting on ; then there was the guy who had written above his mirror and read every morning "TO-DAY I AM THE ONLY PERSON RESPONSIBLE TO MAKE MYSELF HAPPY" ; what makes one person happy may not appeal to the next person, so the exploration of the Discovery of Happiness continues ; Personally my own corner of happiness comes from doing my best to put God FIRST in my life "but" says you "you'r a priest!!!" so what?, priests are human beings like the rest of their fellow human beings, flawed, incomplete and with sinful inclinations to be dealt with ; go exploring, discover the will of God in your own life thru' regular prayer, lead a life of simplicity, recognize that you(..all of us..) need God, and that without Him, life has no purpose ; Occasionally meditate on that first beatitude from st. Matthew's gospel, one such translation is **BLESSED ARE THOSE WHO RECOGNIZE THEIR NEED OF GOD, THEIRS IS THE KINGDOM OF HEAVEN...**

Lastly, next time you enjoy something really life giving, e.g. a great tasting cup of coffee, a slice of your favourite cake/sandwich/take-away/whatever, and if your good health allows you to enjoy even more and more, then THANK the Lord for blessings ; NURTURE THANKSGIVING TO GOD FOR EVEN THE SIMPLIST OF JOYS, AND HAPPINESS WILL COME YOUR WAY

SUGGESTION ; why not have a low key Christmas this year? ; this would be a gesture of solidarity with the many families who have been hit hard economically over the past few months due to the Pandemic, along with the many workers who will be alone and far from their loved ones because of very limited international air travel.....be grateful that you have not been the latest victim of the Covid-19.....stay healthy.....regards, fr.Kieran

God bless ..... stay healthy...

*Fr Kieran A. Fitzharris SVD*