

#### Fourth Sunday of Ordinary Time 2023 A

***“You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.”*** Those are perhaps the most well-known words of St. Augustine, the conclusion he reached after many years of passionate searching for happiness. Despite popularity, wealth, successful career, and all the rest that are supposed to make up the good life, none of it satisfied him. Something was missing – meaning, purpose, some goal in life beyond catering to himself. ***For everything the world offers is not really enough for the human heart, made for happiness with God.***

The Beatitudes are perhaps the most well-known words of Jesus. They are His answer to that same question Augustine and every person asks ... across every time and place ... ***how can I be happy?*** Indeed, thanks to global marketing and the Internet, there are more voices promising to answer that question now than ever before. But, as Pope Paul VI said almost 50 years ago: the modern world has greatly multiplied sources of pleasure and entertainment, but it cannot seem to find *joy* – because Augustine was right: ***joy is finally found only in a trusting relationship with God.***

This means that ***happiness is a gift we must receive, not a product we can make, find online, borrow from another.*** The need to receive happiness means that we are not in control, we must wait, we must depend on another – **on God, whom we can never control but we can always trust.** To many people, that dependence on God seems intolerable. God seems too remote, unpredictable, slow, demanding – if He exists at all. To many it can seem that the future we make for ourselves must be better than the vague possibilities of grace. And that seems to make even more sense when Jesus outlines His way to happiness ... poverty, meekness, lowliness, sorrow, hunger and thirst, persecution. Does that really sound like the path to a happy life?

But the Beatitudes are not a theoretical and abstract treatise on being happy despite our troubles. They are an invitation to be conformed day by day to be more like Jesus, because they describe His own path to joy. He chose poverty for both his birth, laid in a manger, and his death, suffering on the Cross and laid in a borrowed tomb. He will weep over the death of Lazarus, his friend. He will meekly accept scourging, ridicule, scorn. He will hunger and thirst in his 40 days in the desert. He will heal and feed and teach in witness to his Father's mercy. He will resist every temptation and make peace through the Blood of his Cross. He will be insulted, persecuted, despised ... all so we can rejoice and be glad to share not only the life of heaven someday, but his love and joy already now, every day.

Today, Jesus once again comes to us in the Eucharist. Welcoming Him brings no sudden magical change, no instant solution to the problems and concerns we carried in our hearts when Mass started. But they are all taken up into the mystery of Cross, giving us certain hope for a future full of joy. How can we be happy? Bring whatever questions, doubts, sorrows, restlessness in yourself to this Communion with the source of all joy. Today, our Amen can be a profession of faith that says: "Jesus, I do not always understand You, but I do trust You. ***You have made us for Yourself, O Lord, and our hearts are restless until they rest in You.***"