

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME; Cycle-A; Jan. 29th 2023
Zephaniah 2:3; 3:12-13; 1Corinthians 1:26-31; Matthew 5:1-12

Dear Sisters and Brothers,

It is a wrong concept among the people that to be happy in the world we need abundance of wealth, fame and recognition. On the other hand, many think that the poor, the lowly, the meek and the oppressed are always very unhappy. If this criterion is true, most of the people in the developed countries are mostly happy and the people of the developing or the underdeveloped countries have no reason to be happy at all. But our experience shows that just because one is wealthy doesn't guarantee that he/she is happy and because one is poor does not mean that he/she is totally unhappy. The three liturgical readings affirm that happiness or blessedness should not be measured by material riches or fame; rather God is the real source of happiness and those who rely on Him will be blessed or happy. That is why the author of **Psalm 23** sings, **"The Lord is my shepherd and there is nothing I shall I want."**

In today's first reading Prophet Zephaniah reminds the people that it is the people who are humble, lowly and oppressed will be sheltered by God. They are the small group called the '*Anawim of Yahweh*' or *Remnant* of the people of Israel in exile. God would be rebuilding the nation on them. In the second reading we see St. Paul drawing the attention of Corinthians on their special election by God. It is not because they were wise or influential or born in high class society that God chose them, but by choosing the foolish and the lowly, God wanted to prove the emptiness of the wisdom of the world.

Jesus begins his Sermon on the Mount with the utterances of the Beatitudes. In Luke too we see the Beatitudes in slightly different way as part of Jesus' Sermon on the Plain. Beatitude traces to Latin and French roots means **Blessed**, or **happy or fortunate**. Beatitudes are referred to over 25 times in the Psalms and other Old Testament books. But the best known Beatitudes are found in the gospels of Matthew and Luke. They show us the ways and means to find the real source of blessedness or happiness, in this world and the world to come. But among the many teachings of Jesus the Beatitudes are the ones badly attacked by many for centuries as a frontal assault to human reason and sensibilities. For, the Beatitudes lift high all those realities which the world considers as wretchedness and evil. No sensible man will agree that poverty, mourning, humility, hunger and thirst are something to be appreciated and held with esteem. Then we may wonder, why does Jesus give so much emphasis to these so called evils? If we examine the public ministry of Jesus, one thing we notice that Jesus always moved with the poor, the hungry, the lowly, the outcast and the oppressed. For the reason, these were the people who had nothing to be proud of and like the scribes and the Pharisees they never

felt self-sufficient or filled. So they had enough room for Jesus and his teachings in their hearts and they were ready to rely on God in their troubles. The self-sufficient people, on the other hand, always turn to their wealth and technology to solve their problems and God will be their least source of help. When they stumble on the limitations of these worldly things they get disappointed and broken hearted. But they will never turn to God for help. Whereas as the people who have the qualities which are mentioned in the Beatitudes will, not only turn to God for help but also will understand the sufferings of their fellow beings too. And these are the people who make changes in the world for good. In short, we may not be materially rich, but if we remain with the Lord we will be spiritually rich and also happy in any situations, for we know that God is with us. In Ps 84: 6 the Psalmist admits, “**Happy are those who find refuge in you..**” Again in Ps 18:2-3 the Psalmist expresses his trust in the power of God: “**I love you my Lord, my strength, Lord, my rock, my fortress, my deliverer.**”

An unknown author gives us 10 tips to be happy or feel blessed always:

- 1. Give something to one in need without a string attached to it.*
- 2. Do a kindness to somebody and then forget it.*
- 3. Spend a few minutes with someone who needs some encouragement.*
- 4. Look intently into the face of a baby and marvel.*
- 5. Laugh often.*
- 6. Give thanks to God thousand times daily.*
- 7. Pray or you will lose the way.*
- 8. Work with vim and vigor.*
- 9. Plan as though you will live forever.*
- 10. Live as though you will die tomorrow.*

Someone gives us the **Devil’s Beatitudes too:**

Blessed are those who are too tired, too busy, too distracted to spend one hour in the Church once a week, they are my best workers.

Blessed are those who wait to be asked and expect to be thanked, I can use them for my business.

Blessed are those who are touchy. Soon they will stop going to Church, they are my missionaries.

Blessed are those who sow gossip and trouble, they are my beloved children. Blessed are those who have no time to pray, they are my victims.

Blessed are when you hear these things and think, it is not about me and everything is said about others, you are already in my cabin.