



Theology Corner

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Theological Reflections by Paul Chutikorn - Director of Faith Formation

“Happiness from the Beatitudes: Blessed Are Those Who Mourn”

Last week, we talked about the meaning of being “poor in spirit” as being detached from wealth or any type of material objects. This week, we now turn to what it means to say, **“Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted.”** I often like to substitute the word “blessed” with the word “happy” since that is, after all, what it means. When we read it that way, it reads: “Happy are those who are sad.” Striking isn’t it? How can we be happy and sad at the same time? Well, just like the previous beatitude of being poor in spirit, Christ is not asking us to be completely destitute. Rather, he asks us to not be inordinately attached to material wealth, but to instead be attached to God. Likewise, here, Christ does not mean that we should always be mourning and crying in order to be happy. This is, of course, counterintuitive. Instead, he means to say that happy are those who are not inordinately attached to *pleasure*.

Blessed are those who mourn for they shall be comforted. This comfort applies, to some degree, to both this life and the next. The comfort that we get from refusing to be attached to earthly pleasures is comforting insofar as we are at *peace*. If we follow this beatitude, we would not allow ourselves to become so out-of-control that we base our actions on the pleasure we get from them. In other words, we cannot become the people who must do whatever feels good for them in order to be content. The virtue of temperance is needed in order to realize that our self-control over the pleasures of the world brings happiness inasmuch as we would not become addicted to always feeling good. So, if we abstain from some pleasure that is not objectively good for us, then we will be comforted in the long run. It is wise to not always be concerned with the particular goods of the here and now, but with true universal goods. As always, there is the aspect of being comforted in heaven because if we suffer on earth, we will be rewarded in heaven. We are all called to take up our crosses and follow Him. Does this mean we should actively look for ways to suffer? No! It means that we should approach our sufferings as ways to purify our hearts in order to make it so that our every desire is directed toward that which is goodness itself – namely God.

A perfect example of this is to look to the foot of the cross. Christ completely detached himself from the love of pleasure by the extreme pain and suffering that he willfully endured on the cross. He did not go actively looking to be crucified, but he accepted it for the greater good – to fight against evil. He did it and he came out victorious. We too will come out victorious when we resist evil, avoid the near occasions of sin and the temptation to commit acts that are evil simply because they fulfill the desires of the flesh. When we do mourn over loss or some pain in our lives, just remember that blessed be those who will offer this pain and suffering up to God and think of it as a share in the sufferings of Christ that will ultimately lead us to greater purity and utter dependence on God who alone brings true happiness.

Have any questions or comments on this week’s Theology Corner? Join in on the conversation in the Theology Corner discussion group on the MyParish app!

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