

Home Mission Sunday: Homily Hints

To rejoice isn't merely an emotional reaction but is intrinsically connected to mercy. On Home Mission Sunday we are invited to 'Rejoice with me' in the Gospel of the day (Luke 15) Jesus rejoices at the repentance of a sinner more than he remembers their sin. Not just because they have said sorry but because they have turned to God, this is what makes God rejoice.

Rejoice

Mercy

Receiving mercy is our destiny. We are at our spiritual best when receiving God's mercy because it is then we recognise our need for Him in our hearts. As Catholics, we belong to the community of mercy. In the same way that the sheep that belonged to the herd that is now found, becomes a contented sheep on the shoulders of Jesus, and the coin that the woman had lost returns to where it belonged - so it is with the mercy of God. We are back where we belong - in the love of God. We rejoice in this and God rejoices in our happiness with him.

The Gospel of the day presents the first one of three parables united by the same word. It is a question of three things which were lost: the lost sheep (Luke 15:3-7), the lost drachma (Luke 15:8-10), and the lost son (Luke 15:11-32). The three parables are addressed to the Pharisees and to the doctors of the law who criticised Jesus (Luke 15:1-3). They are also addressed to each one of us.

Jesus focuses on the sheep that got lost rather than being content with the 99 that were safe. In the context of the official religion of the time, to be the 'lost sheep' would lead to descent into despair, we would be without the hope of being accepted. Here Jesus offers a radically different perspective: in recognising we are a lost sinner, we hear that Jesus seeks us, he wants to carry us back to the fold if we would just allow ourselves to be found. In addition, we are reminded that there will be greater joy in heaven for a sinner who is converted, than for ninety-nine who do not need conversion, or at least don't think they do.

God rejoices with us. The angels in heaven rejoice with us. This message also recalls what God tells us in the book of Isaiah about how greatly he values each of us from birth: "Look, I have engraved you on the palms of my hands..." (Isaiah 49:16). "Because you are precious in my eyes, and honoured, and I love you!" (Isaiah 43:4).

The Gospel of the Day

Who is lost?

So who are the lost sheep today? Are they sinners? Are they non-believers? Are they those who are misled in their beliefs in our opinion? Or are they you and me?

As we can see from Luke's parable, the religious leaders weren't impressed with a God who spends all his time going after sinners, for them this was not good time management. Perhaps they thought God should be spending his time with the well-behaved ones who apparently followed all the rules and never strayed. So to see Jesus do the direct opposite disturbed them, they were scandalised. Yet it is very clear that our God is the God of the lost, and the God who celebrates when the lost are found. Jesus is the Saviour who "welcomes sinners and eats with them." This is something for us to rejoice and celebrate. Something for us to get others excited about.

God of the lost

A further challenge

The religious leaders and Jesus present us with a further challenge - where does our confidence lie, in Christ or in ourselves? And if we are thankful for mercy shown in our lives, then we will rejoice for mercy shown to others. Mercy heals our desire for revenge or for harbouring grievances. When we are forgiven and we forgive others we are sharing in the joy Jesus brings. There is no better way.

Sunday 15th September 2019

Home Mission Sunday Quotations

Let no one mourn that he has fallen
again and again: for forgiveness
has risen from the grave!

St. John Chrysostom

Our hearts were made for You,
O Lord, and they are restless
until they rest in You.

St. Augustine of Hippo

In my deepest wound
I saw your glory
and it dazzled me.

St. Augustine

“Nothing great is ever
achieved without
enduring much.”

St. Catherine of Siena

Genuine love is
demanding, but its
beauty lies precisely in
the demands it makes.

Pope Francis

Faith in the resurrection of Jesus
says that there is a future for
every human being;
the cry for unending life
which is a part of the person is
indeed answered.

God exists: that is the real
message of Easter.

Anyone who even begins to
grasp what this means also
knows what it means to be
redeemed.

Pope Benedict XVI

The cross means there is
no shipwreck without hope;
there is no dark without dawn;
nor storm without haven.

John Paul II

We cannot all do great things,
but we can do small things with
great love.

St Mother Teresa

Know that the greatest service that
man can offer to God is to help
convert souls.

St. Rose of Lima

The Lord is loving unto man,
and swift to pardon,
but slow to punish.
Let no man therefore despair of
his own salvation.

St. Cyril of Jerusalem

I have found the paradox,
that if you love until it hurts,
there can be no more hurt,
only more love.

St Mother Teresa