

Homily by Deacon Julio Lara

Fourteenth Sunday of Ordinary Time

7.3.2022

As I reflected on today's readings, a word that kept coming back to me is the word Rejoice. I think about how God expects us to Rejoice but then I look around at our society, I look at the news and all I hear is **pandemic, wars, social injustice, discrimination, abuse, illness, addictions**, and I wonder how can I Rejoice? Then I think, well maybe he didn't mean it for us now, he meant it for the disciples and the apostles. Then I think about the first Christians and how they were being **persecuted, punished, chastised, endured sufferings, and many were killed**, and I wonder how in the world can they Rejoice. So, what exactly did Jesus mean by Rejoice, because he would not ask something of us that can't be accomplished.

The problem is that I have been thinking of rejoicing as merely the emotion, as a feeling of happiness and therefore it is difficult for me to see how a person can be happy when they are **persecuted, abused, ill, when they lose a loved one**. To rejoice goes beyond the emotion or the feeling, to rejoice is **to have joy again**.

Words like **remember, restore, resume, rebuild all require an action**, doing something again. **When we remember** we are bringing back to memory, **when we restore**, we are bringing back to a previous condition, **when we resume**, we are continuing something we had previously started, **when we rebuild**, we are building something again. The action is to bring something back, something to a previous condition. In the same tone, to **Rejoice is to bring back joy**. What is that joy? That joy is the hope in our Lord, it is the fact that our Lord came and fought our fight, that he opened the gates of Heaven and is preparing a place for us. To have joy is to have hope in knowing that he awaits us. When he asks us to Rejoice, he is asking us to go back to the joy that was placed in us at baptism, the joy of being made children of God, the joy of knowing that we have an eternal Father, the joy of knowing that no matter what happens to us in this world, our Father has a place for us. A place with **no sufferings, no illness, no wars, pandemics, social injustice, or abuse a place with no death**.

St. Paul reminds the Galatians that our Lord Jesus Christ, died on the cross for the new creation, the cross should symbolize that new creation for us, the new creation which is the new Jerusalem... The prophet Isaiah tells us that we should be joyful with Jerusalem because Jerusalem will be the land of prosperity. The heavenly Jerusalem is the new creation, the place that our Lord is preparing for us, it is the Kingdom of heaven, our true hope, our reason for joy... In the gospel, Jesus sends out disciples two by twos to evangelize, and they come back FULL of joy because they saw that they had powers they never had before, **but Jesus** reminds them that the true joy does not rest on our current situation, **it does not rest on our powers, on our emotions or feelings, our true joy comes from the hope of the heavenly kingdom.**

As our readings remind us to rejoice, we should call to mind the true joy, which is the hope in our eternity, let us bring it back, let us restore our joy, let us resume our journey towards the kingdom, let us rebuild our path, let us return to our original joy, the joy of hope.

This weekend our nation celebrates its independence, it is a time when we get together with family, with friends, we share meals, we barbeque, we have fireworks, and we just enjoy each other's company. I ask you to take a moment to enjoy it and while enjoying it, remember that enjoying family and friends is just a small foretaste of what the heavenly banquet has in store for us, therefore **REJOICE.**