

True Happiness: A Valentine's Day Reflection on the Beatitudes

My Brothers and Sisters in the Risen Lord,

This past Friday, many of us celebrated Valentine's Day, a day filled with roses, chocolates, and expressions of love. In the flurry of cards and gifts, have we ever stopped to ask ourselves: What truly makes us happy? Is it the fleeting joy of earthly pleasures, or is there a deeper, more lasting kind of happiness to be found?

In this Sunday's Gospel, from Luke 6:17, 20-26, Jesus presents us with the Beatitudes, a profound teaching that flips our understanding of happiness on its head. "Blessed are you who are poor, for yours is the kingdom of God. Blessed are you who are now hungry, for you will be satisfied." These words are not only radical but deeply challenging. They speak to the eternal perspective of God—a perspective that often contrasts sharply with our worldly values.

From our human standpoint, happiness is often tied to wealth, comfort, and recognition. Yet, Jesus declares the poor, the hungry, and the weeping as blessed. Each statement he makes is a jolt to our world's twisted priorities. Jesus reminds us that true joy is not found in what we possess but in the depth of our love for God and others. As writer-philosopher Peter Kreeft observes, "The more we love God and our neighbors here, the more we let our hearts be broken by love here. . . the more joy." This joy is not cheap; it comes with sacrifice, humility, and often pain.

Valentine's Day, though wonderful, can sometimes highlight our tendency to seek happiness in things that don't last: the perfect gift, the flawless relationship, the affirmation of others. These are good in themselves, but they pale in comparison to the joy of a life rooted in self-giving love. This is the kind of love Jesus calls us to in the Beatitudes—a love that sees beyond the immediate to the eternal.

Humans tend to appreciate things best by contrast. We value light because we've experienced darkness, and we cherish joy because we've known sorrow. Jesus invites us to this deeper understanding of happiness, one that transcends earthly moments. When we embrace lives of service, love, and even suffering for the sake of others, we align ourselves with God's vision.

This week, as we reflect on the Beatitudes, let's ask ourselves: Are we chasing the temporary happiness of the world, or are we pursuing the lasting joy of God's kingdom? May we find courage to live as Jesus taught, trusting that the more we give of ourselves in love, the more we will taste the true happiness he promises.

Yours in Christ,
Fr. Rudy