

FOURTH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME (Year A)
2-1-2026 Homily

I. Introduction

A newspaper in England once asked its readers to send in their responses to the question: “Who are the happiest people on earth?” The four winning responses were: first, a craftsman or artist whistling over a job well done; second, a little child at the beach building sand castles; third, a mother bathing her baby at the end of a busy day; and fourth, a surgeon or doctor who’s successfully finished a dangerous or difficult operation and saved a human life (James Hewett, *Illustrations Unlimited*, p. 281). Notice that nothing was mentioned about being powerful or rich or famous in order to be happy; everything involved something simple or ordinary, or having an opportunity and doing one’s best to use it.

Two men were about to leave each other after finishing a conversation, and one of them said, “Have a good day.” The other man paused, and then responded, “They’re all good—it’s what we do with them that determines whether or not they stay that way” (op. cit., p. 280). This is certainly true; we remember from the Book of Genesis that when God created the world, He pronounced everything He had done, day by day, to be good. As human beings, we have a natural tendency to think and plan and achieve and acquire and keep busy—and in the midst of all this busyness we can easily overlook God’s plan, and forget the blessings He has already given us. Life on earth is a wonderful gift—*if* we use it to prepare ourselves for life in Heaven. That’s why we are truly blessed when we live according to God’s standards, instead of our own.

II. Development

Jesus today talks about blessedness, which refers to true and lasting happiness. When we look at the Beatitudes, it’s quite clear that they present God’s point of view—for not all of them make sense according to the standards and values of this world. To be poor in spirit goes against the common desire to be prosperous and successful; greed is an important and ever-present part of how the world works. However, Jesus teaches that our true and lasting treasure is in Heaven.

The world would say it makes no sense to claim that the sorrowing are blessed; no, we’re better off avoiding sacrifices and challenges whenever we can. Jesus tells us, however, that we must die to self if we are to live forever. The world would say there’s no future in being lowly or merciful—but Our Lord promises that those who choose these values will be eternally blessed. To be persecuted or insulted or slandered would seem to be, in the world’s eyes, a great misfortune—but Jesus says those who suffer in His Name will share in the glory and peace of His Kingdom.

All our sufferings and misfortunes can lead to everlasting happiness—if we offer them up to God. As St. Paul tells us in the 2nd Reading, we are not necessarily wise or powerful or well-born or influential—not according to the world’s standards. Nevertheless, God has chosen us, and by this choice He makes it possible for us to be true and forever happy.

III. Conclusion

There was once an enormously wealthy man who was always very depressed, so he offered a large sum of money to the greatest philosophers or wise men of his city if they could help him find happiness. One philosopher brought him a new and fascinating game he had invented. The rich man was delighted, and found it very interesting . . . for awhile, but then he grew tired of it, and his depression returned. A second philosopher put him to work sawing boards, planing them, and nailing them together to make all sorts of furniture and bookcases and other useful, interesting things. The rich man's spirits were lifted for awhile, because manual labor is a great way of taking one's mind off one's troubles, but the day finally came when he could think of nothing else to build, and so his depression returned. Finally a third philosopher gave him some very simple advice: begin doing things for others. The wealthy man thereupon began a life of service, using his fortune and his talents to help persons in need, and his depression went away and never returned (Roy B. Zuck, *The Speaker's Quote Book*, p. 186). Those who live only for themselves always end up disappointed; those who live for God, and who express this through their concern for the people around them, always end up discovering and experiencing far more blessings than they could ever have expected.

Every day is a good day—if we live it as God desires. Ask yourself this: Who is happier—the wealthy person who's always worrying about holding onto and increasing his or her money, or the ordinary person who gratefully accepts each new day in a spirit of trust? Who is happier—the well-known celebrity who constantly frets about her image and fan appeal and her wrinkle lines, or the simple woman who's content with herself as she is? Who is happier—the influential power-broker who constantly needs to defend his reputation and position against enemies and critics, or the humble man who's willing to accept whatever role in life God gives him? If money and fame and power bring happiness, why do we see so many suicides, arrests, divorces, scandals, and shattered lives among those who have these things, among the so-called best and brightest of our society? The standards of the world can glitter and dazzle us—but all too often they're only a bright, shining lie. I think it's readily apparent to us that there can be no true happiness unless we're at peace with God.

This is the message Jesus offers us—and He does so with a sense of love, kindness, understanding, acceptance, and *urgency*. He doesn't want to see any more ruined or wasted lives; He doesn't want any of us to be led astray. Worldly standards can quickly entangle and enslave us; God's standard's set us free. Each day given to us by God is a gift, an opportunity, and a challenge: a chance to show that we truly love Him, that we truly love our neighbor, and that we truly love ourselves. If we live every day for God, it truly will be a good day, and Our Lord's wonderful promise in the Gospel will become true for us: “Rejoice and be glad, for your reward will be great in Heaven.”