

PASTOR'S NOTE

10 June 2018 ~ Tenth Sunday in Ordinary Time

“Rejoice and Be Glad”

have never liked the word holy, and never really wanted to be holy. In Catholic life it's a word that is used so superficially; it's so often misunderstood – not a commodity for your average Kiwi bloke. Being holy can be a real turnoff, for many. The “holy” so often seem to be looking down their noses in judgemental ways.

Pope Francis has come to my rescue. In his recent reflection – “GAUDETE ET EXSULTATE” (Rejoice and Be Glad) he speaks of holiness in grounded and earthy ways. This document, for me, hits the spot. This document is a radical call to holiness in today's world. Pope Francis is not a pleaser, he is a prophet who is not shy at afflicting the comfortable and comforting the afflicted.

For our reflection lets look at a few of the thoughts of Pope Francis: “Holiness is not about swooning in mystic rapture.”

“We must not ignore the need for moments of grief, solitude, and silence before God”.

“Anything done out of anxiety, pride or the need to impress others will not lead to holiness”.

“It is not healthy to love silence while fleeing interactions with others, to want peace and quiet while avoiding activity, to seek prayer while disdain service.

“Everything can be accepted and integrated into our lives in this world and become a part of our path to holiness”.

“I ask that we never regard prayerful silence as a form of escape and rejection of the world around us.”

“Spiritual corruption is worse than the fall of a sinner, for it is a comfortable and self-satisfied form of blindness.”

Pope Francis is telling us that true holiness is sought in daily life and living among the people near to us rather than in the abstract or superhuman model. In a recent homily, the Pope said “The pathway to holiness is simple, don't go back, go forward with strength. Holiness should not be reduced to a “holiness of the dry cleaners, so neat and nice.” We are reminded that holiness is not the fruit of isolation, it's living in the midst of the people of God.

Pope Francis speaks of two subtle enemies of holiness. I was pleased that, he mentioned Pelagianism; it has often concerned me and in ministry, I have often spoken of it. It is a heresy that has plagued the church and is more prevalent than we might think.

We cannot buy God's friendship with our good works. So often we see people who think that if they pray more, if they try harder God will love them and like them more.

We are saved with the gift of God's love not by our efforts. Our prayer must never be a manipulation of God.

I once heard someone say that Pelagianism was “muscular Christianity”, all about being strong and doing it alone.

One can never have a healthy spiritual life or prayer life if one is compelled or obsessive. Compulsion is always the number one enemy of authentic spirituality or holiness.

Perhaps, many of us need to build our spiritual lives on our humanity. It seems this is the strength of the Pope. Perhaps we need to be more laid back and relaxed if we are to grow, in a holiness that is authentic.

Pope Francis concludes his reflection by leaving us with the great homily of Jesus – the Beatitudes. (Matthew 5: 3-12, Luke 6: 20-23). It is there he reminds us that we see the portrait of the Master, it is in this kind of living that we grow in holiness.

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