

GOD'S EXPECTATIONS FOR ALL OF US

The readings for today's Mass tell us much about what Christ wanted and still wants his church to be like. It will be one of joy and love with only a few rules and regulations, totally unlike the Jewish faith in the time of Jesus. Just note how often he confronted the leaders of the people who constantly made complicated regulations which had to be followed if one were to be a Jew in good standing. All this was contrary to the preaching of Jesus who stressed the love of God for us and the love we should have for one another.

The Gospel for today is the marriage feast at Cana where Christ changed water into wine, the first of his miracles. It is important to note all the little details of this incident. First, Mary and her son Jesus were invited to this celebration. They were most likely friends of the families involved. Jesus came along with a small group of men whom he had just recently asked to follow him. This small band would shortly become his twelve apostles. The celebration was in full swing when Mary noticed some concern on the face of the person in charge talking with the groom, some problem developing which she quickly found to be the fact that they were beginning to run out of wine. She had to do something so she went to her son, Jesus and simply told him they did not have enough wine. He told his mother that this was no concern of his, but she just simply walked away, knowing full well that he would do something. Her confidence was such that she told the servants present to do whatever her son would ask them to do. Jesus asked them to fill the large water jars with water, each holding quite a few gallons, and then take a small amount and give it to the head waiter. When he tasted it he was dumbfounded as to why the best wine was to be served last! This was not the way it was done! It was probably his disciples who first noticed this miracle. Just who was this Jesus they were now following?

Note several important facets of this Miracle. First, it was done because Mary his mother asked him to solve the problem. She had total faith in her son and knew with certitude he would act. How, she did not know, but the problem would be solved. Note next that this was a very human problem which when solved would avoid having the bride and groom be embarrassed in any way. Note also it was done to keep a celebration going with everyone enjoying themselves. It was not some disease, some human malady, some deformity, some lose of sight or hearing as was the case for all the miracles Jesus did over the next three years. It was simply done to avoid an embarrassment and have everyone present continue to enjoy them-selves.

This was the mission of Jesus, not just to undo the sin of Adam and Eve, but to show everyone that having God a part of their lives will always bring joy. It is Joy that should dominate the lives of all who would follow him, not just happiness. Joy is something no one can take away; happiness can evaporate in an instant. Yes, there would be problems in everyone's lives from time to time, for some seemingly all the time, others only seldom. Sorrow would be a part of being human, but sorrow can coexist with joy, for joy is the fact that one is always in contact with their creator, their God. All this is part of the fact that in this life success always involves hard work, some pain, some discouragement, and some failures. But if God is a part of it all, then one can realistically cope knowing that in the end, God will never let one down. Yet for some they seem to fall between the cracks and are forgotten by all those around them. Yet even in such disasters, God can still be very close and his hand can be felt. Is it easy? No! But

the firm trust in God will always get one through every crisis. Countless examples throughout history prove this to be true.

Every human relationship always takes some effort to continue, to develop, to grow. There will be setbacks, but these can be challenges that actually in the long run enhance the relationship. So, too, with one's relationship with their God. At times, this will be wonderful, but usually at most times there is something missing. That is precisely where one must take advantage of all the helps that Jesus gave his church, primarily the sacraments in general, but most importantly the Mass. Fundamentally the Mass is a reenactment of the passion and death of Jesus, his sacrifice of his life given to his heavenly father that all his followers may have a full life. The Mass was given to the Church through the apostles at the Last Supper where Christ fulfilled his promise of coming to us as food and drink, coming totally as himself hiding under the form of bread and wine. A year earlier he told all his followers that unless they eat his body and drink his blood, they would not have life. The crowd balked at such a statement but Christ did nothing to dissuade them from their fears. He meant what he said literally, NOT figuratively. His closest followers, the twelve apostles, did not understand it, but they trusted totally in Christ and would not leave him. It was at the last supper that they then found out just how he would give them his body and blood to eat and drink.

When Christ then said, "Do this in remembrance of me," he gave them and their successors the power to do the same. Thus down through the ages, he would always remain in his Church, even to the end of time. Today, the Mass we have may have changed a little in the way it is done, but it is essentially the identical same as when Jesus changed bread and wine into his body and blood at the Last Supper. Therefore, if one wants to continue to enjoy this life no matter what it may throw at them, one of necessity must partake in the Mass as often as possible. This is what will empower one to face life no matter what and still keep a smile on their face.

Yes, Christ came to earth to help everyone who believes in him not only to enjoy life, but to be a real part in constantly making life to be joyful and hopeful. Is this really possible? Just look back over one's life and note that at some time or other, one has come across a human being who still smiles in the midst of terrible crises and even pain. At the time one met such a person or noticed one, it all seemed to be impossible, yet it was real. Occasionally, such instances are noted on various news programs in segments with various names as "making a difference" or "person of the week" to name two. In God's providence, such examples simply keep popping up everywhere. And usually when one sees or hears of such an individual, they instinctively think that God has to be a part of their lives.

The theme of this Sunday that God really does want everyone to enjoy life is a reality which all too many miss. For some, it is because they want to go it alone. For others, they want to be self made persons. And for many, God somehow has never been a part of their lives. How sad! All this does not have to be. If one takes Christ seriously and then tries to live as he has taught us, their example will touch countless others, others who one will most likely never meet in this life. Joy is something that cannot be hidden. No matter what one does, it will always shine through one's actions, words, and simply through their living. Joyful people may seem rare, but they do exist in greater numbers than one realizes. Come, join this joyful crowd; experience life as Christ wants us to live.

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