

OCTOBER 5 FATHER ROSHAN LOY D'SOUZA

Homily: What happens when we encounter Christ: We Rejoice.

Most of our lives are spent, in some manner, tracking our accomplishments: crossing items off our “to do” lists, adding another skill to our resume, putting little more efforts into our financial security and so on.

More selflessly, perhaps, we strive to meet a spiritual goal like going on a pilgrimage, or volunteering, or donating talent or treasure. We know it is our duty each day to choose good over evil, and we pray the Our Father and ask God to help us avoid temptation and sin.

There is no harm in delighting in the good things we have done and the evils we have avoided, as long as we give God the glory. But Jesus asks that we find our deepest joy by looking forward, not back: our hope is Heaven, and that is cause for rejoicing.

Jesus told his disciples that they were blessed to see him, listen to him, and do the same works that he did. Jesus offers himself to us completely in the Eucharist. We have all that he has. Although we don't see Jesus in person, with eyes of faith we can be as empowered as those first disciples were. It does not take great wisdom or great learning to trust in God. True wisdom is knowing the limits of our abilities and the great power of the Holy Spirit.

Jesus wants us to experience the same closeness he has with his Father. The most perfect love we can know is through the relationship of the Holy Trinity, with the love between the Father and Son extending to the Holy Spirit.

Small children of loving parents do not worry about where they are going or how their needs will be met; they trust fully in Mom and Dad to guide them and provide for them. That is exactly the kind of trust Jesus reminds us we should show him. How can we practice this trust? We can toss aside our “grown-up” self and see ourselves like as wide-eyed, joyful child, fully ready to follow where God wants to lead.

Today's gospel reading gives us an insight into Jesus' prayer, a joyful prayer of praise inspired by the Holy Spirit. 'Filled with joy by the Holy Spirit, he said "I bless you Father, Lord of heaven and earth"'.

The prayer of praise is the most selfless form of prayer there is. It is a movement towards God without any reference to us. The prayer of petition is also a movement towards God but with a view to God moving towards us in our need.

Jesus thanks the Father in heaven for revealing to his disciples the wisdom and knowledge of God. What does Jesus' prayer tell us about God and about ourselves? First, it tells us that God is both Father and Lord of earth as well as heaven. He is both Creator and Author of all that he has made, the first origin of everything and transcendent authority, and at the same time, goodness and loving care for all his children.

All fatherhood and motherhood is derived from him (Ephesians 3:14-15). Jesus' prayer also contains a warning that pride can keep us from the love and knowledge of God.

What makes us ignorant and blind to the things of God? Sinful pride springs from exaggerated self-centeredness. It closes the mind to God's truth and wisdom for our lives. The angels fell into pride and were cast out of heaven. The virtue of humility, the only true remedy against false pride, and which is very different from the feelings of inferiority and low self-esteem, leads us to a true recognition of who we are in God and of our dependence on God.

Jesus contrasts intellectual pride with child-like simplicity and humility. The simple of heart are like "babes" in the sense that they see purely without pretense and acknowledge their dependence and trust in the one who is greater, wiser, and more trustworthy. They seek one thing but the greatest good who is God himself.

Simplicity of heart is wedded with humility, the queen of virtues, because humility inclines the heart towards grace and truth. Just as pride is the root of every sin and evil, so humility is the only soil in which the grace of God

can take root. It alone takes the right attitude before God and allows him as God to do all. God opposes the proud but gives grace to the humble.

The grace of Christ-like humility inclines us to God and disposes us to receive God's wisdom. Nothing can give us greater joy than the knowledge that we are God's beloved and that our names are written in heaven. Do you seek to be like Jesus Christ in humility and simplicity of heart?

Jesus is the revelation of God -- a God who loves us completely, unconditionally and perfectly. Jesus also promises that God the Father will hear our prayers when we pray in his name. That is why Jesus taught his followers to pray with confidence.

Let our prayer be "Lord, give me the child-like simplicity and purity of faith to gaze upon your face with joy and confidence in your all-merciful love. Remove every doubt, fear, and proud thought which would hinder me from receiving your word with trust and humble submission." Amen.