

8 STEPS TO HAPPINESS

Attending a wedding for the first time, a little girl whispered to her mother, 'Why is the bride dressed in white?' The mother replied, 'Because white is the color of happiness, and today is the happiest day of her life.' The child thought about this for a moment then said, 'So why is the groom wearing black?' (*Annon*) "Everyone seeks happiness. This is without exception. Whatever different means they employ, they all tend to this end". (*Paschal Blaise*) Again, one of the ancient philosophers *Aristotle* observes that everything people do 24 hours a day, 7 days a week, is what they believe will bring them happiness in one form or another. We all want to be happy. However, with the ongoing global pandemic, one might be tempted to ask, is there ultimate happiness? Yes, the happiness we find in Jesus Christ is ultimate and everlasting. In the face of challenges and struggles, let us turn to the **Beatitudes** (Mt 5:1-12). In the Beatitudes, Jesus gives us a prescription for genuine happiness, a prescription for the blessedness which we will inspire and accompany us in this difficult time. The term *beatitude* comes from the Latin noun *beatitudo* which means "happiness".

Jesus gives us 8 steps to happiness in the **BEATITUDES**. **FIRSTLY**, Jesus tells us that if we are to be happy we are to be poor in spirit. That doesn't mean going broke but being poor in spirit is admitting that we are absolutely nothing without God and that everything we have comes from God. Humility might be a better word to describe it.

THE SECOND STEP is a bit contradictory, we might conclude that mourning is not a happy experience so how could Jesus say that mourners are blessed. What Jesus meant is "blessed are those who are sorry for their sins and the sins of others.

THE 3RD STEP to happiness, Jesus urges us to be meek and gentle. We live in a world of violence, we daily witness violence on our streets, violence in our homes, and even cyber violence, "Might is Right" is a slogan we often hear. But Jesus teaches us that if we want to be happy, the way forward is by being gentle and meek, not by throwing our weight around, not overcoming violence with violence. Jesus said in the **4TH STEP** that we will be happy when we hunger and thirst for what is right. This is not necessary to be a human rights activist but when we treat the other individual with profound respect and dignity. When we uphold human dignity and respect the rights of each individual, we are bringing happiness to ourselves and the world in general.

IN THE 5TH STEP, Jesus said being merciful is a way to achieve happiness and blessedness. Everyone knows it is difficult to forgive, and the bigger the hurt the more difficult it is to forgive and it may take longer until we can bring ourselves to forgive. Forgiveness brings inner healing and happiness that is why it is a highly recommended step for happiness. Try this step if there is anyone that needs your forgiveness or if you think that you need someone's forgiveness as well. **THE 6TH STEP** is about holiness, Jesus said the pure in heart are blessed. This doesn't mean just not entertaining impure thoughts rather being pure in heart is living as Christians as prescribed by the Scripture, the love of God and humanity.

IN THE 7TH STEP, Jesus said we are happy when we work for peace. We all long for peace but Jesus said the peacemakers and not just those who long for peace will be blessed. We need to make peace within our families, between neighbors, the wider community, and among nations for where there is peace, there is love.

LASTLY, this century has witnessed more persecution of Christians across the globe. Sometimes people will persecute us because we are followers of Jesus. If we want to be happy, we should never give up on following Jesus. Put together, these 8 steps of happiness are, **humility, compassion, meekness, doing what is right, mercy, purity, peacemaking, and courage**. Our happiness has no price. It cannot be bought. It is not an app that we can download on our smartphones, Happiness does not come from things we possess or from doing whatever we want rather, true happiness can only be found in the love of Jesus.

Dear brothers and sisters in Christ, in these challenging times, let us turn to Jesus our brother and dear friend to draw strength and happiness. God bless you all and stay safe.

Fr Peter and Fr Anselm