

Homily – 28th Sunday in Ordinary Time – Respect Life Mass – Oct. 11, 2020

In our first reading, the prophet Isaiah tells us: “The Lord God will wipe away the tears from every face; ... let us rejoice and be glad that he has saved us!” (Is) This is a reminder that God always leads us out of sorrow and distress. Hope always keeps us going.

Our lives are neither a monotonous and horizontal path, nor a fun ride destined to a catastrophic nonexistence. Deep in our hearts we keep a constant aspiration to a greater happiness. The certainty that we will eventually die does not reduce our desire for boundless happiness. What we want is not an everlasting avoidance of death, but an absolute fulfilment that we know is impossible to achieve in this life. Our experience already points to love as the solution to this inner contradiction. Selfless service of others is the key to a kind of fulfilment that helps us forget about our own suffering and give meaning to it. However, we keep struggling to love fully.

The fact that human life is supposed to be the fruit of love between a man and a woman is God’s language telling us that our very existence is already the fruit of love. We love because we have been loved first. “God created mankind in his image; in the image of God he created them; male and female he created them” (Gn 1:27). But not only are we the fruit of love between the Father, the Son and the Holy Spirit; “God so loved the world that he gave his only Son, so that everyone who believes in him might not perish but might have eternal life” (Jn 3:16).

In 1995, Pope Saint John Paul II proclaimed the encyclical “The Gospel of Life” (Evangelium Vitae), making a “precise and vigorous reaffirmation of the value of human life and its inviolability,” and appealing “to each and every person, in the name of God: **respect, protect, love and serve life, every human life!** Only in this direction will you find justice, development, true freedom, peace and happiness!” (5) He signed that

document on the Feast of the Incarnation, the commemoration of the central event of history, when the God of life and of love took flesh in the form of a human zygote in the womb of Mary of Nazareth.

Pope Francis has said that the Incarnation of Our Lord marks the beginning of the great revolution of tenderness. God reached out to us with infinite tenderness to make us sharers in his own mission to build a culture of encounter, which is the foundation of the culture of life about which Saint John Paul II preached. Pope Francis reminds us that “The Gospel offers us the chance to live life on a higher plane, but with no less intensity: ‘Life grows by being given away, and it weakens in isolation and comfort. Indeed, those who enjoy life most are those who leave security on the shore and become excited by the mission of communicating life to others’.”

With God’s grace, we can identify with these words of St. Paul from our second reading, as we strive to communicate life: “I can do all things in him who strengthens me. Still, it was kind of you to share in my distress. My God will fully supply whatever you need, in accord with his glorious riches in Christ Jesus.” **Life is a feast of truth, goodness and beauty!** We are already guests at the wedding feast for the Son of God, which is celebrated every Mass. “We await the blessed hope, the appearance of the glory of the Great God and of our Savior Jesus Christ...” (Ti 2:13).

“The LORD is my shepherd; I shall not want. In verdant pastures he gives me repose; beside restful waters he leads me; he refreshes my soul. ... Even though I walk in the dark valley I fear no evil; for you are at my side with your rod and your staff that give me courage. ... Only goodness and kindness follow me all the days of my life; and I shall dwell in the house of the Lord for years to come.” (Ps)

Our Lady of Guadalupe, “Mother of the truest God who is the giver of life”, make us sharers in the mission of your Son to give life to the world.