

Joyful Believers

I. A LOOK AT THE THREE READINGS

FIRST READING (Is 66:10-14)

Exhortation to rejoice

¹⁰ Rejoice with Jerusalem and be glad because of her,/ all you who love her;/ Rejoice with her in her joy,/ all you who mourn over her—/ ¹¹So that you may nurse and be satisfied/ from her consoling breast;/ That you may drink with delight/ at her abundant breasts!/
God's promises

¹²For thus says the LORD:/ I will spread prosperity over her like a river,/ like an overflowing torrent,/ the wealth of nations./ You shall nurse, be carried in her arms,/ cradled upon her knees;/ ¹³As a mother comforts her child,/ so I will comfort you;/ in Jerusalem you shall find your comfort./ ¹⁴You will see and your heart shall exult,/ and your bodies shall flourish like the grass;/ The LORD's power shall be revealed to his servants,/ but to his enemies, his wrath.

THE FOCUS: To Rejoice

COMMENTARY

- The Reading exhorts the people (Jews) to rejoice over the city of Jerusalem.
- The text mentions the reasons for rejoicing using the style of parallelism and similes.
- Jerusalem is a sacred city of the Jews. It is where the Temple (presence, *shekinah*, the dwelling place) is.
- Jerusalem is a cause of rejoicing just as it was a cause of sorrow when it was destroyed by the Babylonians.
- V.10 invites readers to rejoice // to be glad.
- V.10 also indicates the one who should rejoice: the ones who love her. The Jewish people had a particular affection to this city on mountain top.
- V.11 uses the imagery of a child sucking milk from breast of its mother abundant with milk (breastfed = healthy baby).
- V.12 spells out the reason why the Jews should rejoice: God will give them prosperity and wealth (because they have been impoverished by their conquerors).
- V.12: “like a river” // “overflowing torrent (simile) = impressive body of flowing water (endless flow of gallons and gallons of water, endless supply which gives life).”
- V.12: “as nurslings” (simile) carried on arms, cuddled = evokes a feeling of security, joy, playfulness.



- V.13 presents again a mother and son relationship, an experience of motherly comfort. God is like a mother, a woman with maternal instincts, with affection to a disturbed, wounded child.
- V.13 reiterates the role of Jerusalem in the lives of the Jews: a place of comfort (consolation).
- V.14 is an assurance that God's promise will come true (your heart will rejoice // your bodies will flourish like grass (simile).
- The last line in v.14 contrasts what happens to the Jews (Israelites): God's power and to Israel's enemies God's wrath.

REFLECTIONS

To understand the message of God in the Bible, we must be open to the style and figures of speech used. Language (Similes and Parallelism) provides infinite possibilities. Through artistic and imaginative construction of sentences, the author can bring out something more meaningful than just informing raw facts and figures.

The Reading contains God's promise to restore the children of Israel scattered all over in the Ancient Near East. The deepest longing of each pious Israelite who knows his faith and history is to live in Jerusalem, the center of the world.

For us Christians, what place we do find security, freedom and peace? Where do you want God should put you? Or what state do you dream to be?

RESPONSORIAL PSALM (Ps 66:1-3, 4-5, 6-7, 16, 20)

LET ALL THE EARTH CRY OUT
TO GOD WITH JOY.

SECOND READING (Gal 6:14-18)

Boasting in the cross, not in the law

^{14d}But may I never **boast** except in the **cross of our Lord Jesus Christ**, through which* the world has been crucified to me, and I to the world. ^{15f}For neither does circumcision mean anything, nor does uncircumcision, but only a new creation.*

Greetings of peace, mercy and grace who follow

^{16m}Peace and mercy be to all who follow this rule* and to the Israel of God. ¹⁷ⁿFrom now on, let no one make troubles for me; for I bear the marks of Jesus* on my body. ^{18o}The grace of our Lord Jesus Christ be with your spirit, brothers. Amen.

THE FOCUS: Boasting in the Cross

COMMENTARY

- Paul is following his position up to the end of his letter to the Galatians.
- What is worth boasting of? Cross of Jesus (v.14) and the New creation (v.14).
- Not worth boasting of? Law [circumcision] (v.15).
- V.14: “uncircumcision” (being just a Gentile, not Jew). What matters to Paul is the cross.
- What is the meaning of the cross of Jesus for Paul?—Through which the world is crucified to him and vice versa.
- V.16 indicates the reward (peace and mercy) to those who follow suit and to the Israel of God.
- In v.17, Paul is not bothered by the Law anymore.
- Paul believes he is crucified himself (stigmatized).
- V.18 is another greeting or wish like in v.16.

REFLECTIONS

For Paul, boasting is allowed but only if we boast in the Lord (in the cross). Paul does not boast of his accomplishments, but in the sufferings he endured in his mission. This boasting contrasts with the Jewish boasting of their accomplishment of the law (circumcision).

The person of Christ matters so much to Paul, especially his identification with Christ as crucified. Christians should be proud of their sufferings, because they are able to share Christ’s sufferings. To work as Christians, we must have this kind of spirituality.

GOSPEL READING (Lk 10:1-12,17-20)

(WITH COMMENTARY TEXTS)

^{1*} ^aAfter this (after his teachings on discipleship as he was journeying to Jerusalem, read last Sunday) the Lord appointed seventy [-two]* (why 72? 12 tribes x 6) others whom he sent ahead of him (advance party to

prepare people for his coming) in pairs (why in pairs?) to every town and place he intended to visit (He did not visit all). ^{2b}He said to them, “The harvest (many towns and villages to go) is abundant but the laborers (apostles, disciples) are few; so ask the master of the harvest (pray to God) to send out laborers for his harvest. ^{3c}Go on your way (imperative to mission); behold, I am sending you like lambs among wolves (expect dangers). ^{4*} ^dCarry no money bag, no sack, no sandals (don’t appear like rich and landlords, but pilgrims); and greet no one along the way (don’t chat or gossip).^e ⁵Into whatever house you enter, first say, ‘Peace to this household (your greetings must embrace all, not just the one you like).’” ^{6f} ^gIf a peaceful person* lives there, your peace will rest on him; but if not, it will return to you. ⁷ⁱStay in the same house (make a homebase) and eat and drink what is offered to you (accept what is given. Here it seems that the food also comes from other sources, not just from the homebase), for the laborer deserves his payment (Usually, the ones who give are those who appreciate their efforts). Do not move about from one house to another (follows up v.7). ^{8*}Whatever town you enter and they welcome you, eat what is set before you (eating again! Don’t choose your food. Don’t be choicy or picky. You’re only a visitor. Don’t turn your host off), ^{9h}cure the sick in it (aha, the disciple brings Jesus’ power to cure) and say to them, ‘The kingdom of God is at hand for you (God’s kingdom belongs to those who accept their teachings. Curing and healing are signs of the coming of God’s kingdom).’ ¹⁰ⁱWhatever town you enter and they do not receive you, go out into the streets and say, ^{11j}‘The dust of your town that clings to our feet, even that we shake off against you (as a sign of protest and coming judgment).’ Yet know this: the kingdom of God is at hand. ^{12k}I tell you, it will be more tolerable for Sodom on that day than for that town (A pity!). ¹⁷The seventy [-two] returned rejoicing (yehey, very successful missionaries), and said, “Lord, even the demons are subject to us because of your name.” (It was not mentioned in the instruction. Luke withheld this information. Style!) ^{18p}Jesus said, “I have observed Satan (like demons) fall like lightning (simile)* from the sky. ^{19q}Behold, I have given you the power ‘to tread upon serpents’ and scorpions and upon the full force of the enemy and nothing will harm you (not mentioned also before, they are invincible). ^{20r}Nevertheless, do not rejoice because the spirits are subject to you, but rejoice because your names are written in heaven (better reason for rejoicing).”

THE FOCUS: Mission of the Disciples

REFLECTIONS

The Gospel talks about the mission of the 72 disciples. They are commissioned, authorized by Jesus to

proclaim the kingdom of God, to heal the sick and cast out demons.

The missionaries are empowered by God, they possess God's power. They go two by two (for protection and support, easy to house and to feed when they go to a house).

They go and return to Jesus. They happily report their successes. They bond together again, after they separate. To Jesus, rejoicing should not come out of the successes (or working powers) but the promise of God that they would dwell in heaven.

II. TYING THE THREE READINGS TOGETHER TO DEVELOP YOUR HOMILY/SHARING

The First Reading talks about rejoicing for going back to Jerusalem.

The Second Reading talks about Paul's success in witnessing to Jesus. He is now happily crucified in Christ; he does not want to be bothered anymore.

The Gospel Reading talks about the missionary work of the 72 disciples and their joy because of successes.

How to develop your sharing / homily

Begin by relating your successes. How do you feel about them? (Happy!)

Some people are happy when they are able to accomplish something which they have not thought before.

What happens to those who are not accomplishing anything? They feel their lives have no meaning. They are not happy. They have low esteem. They sulk. They develop inferiority complex.

When you have feelings like this, listen to what the Lord is saying now.

In the First Reading, God exhorts us to rejoice because he is going to take care of us. He will bring us back to our homes (true ourselves). He will make our dreams come true. He will lavish us with his endless gifts and graces. We have to respond in faith and celebrate our hope.

God has declared the good things that will happen to us and he is determined to do them to us, just as he had done to the Israelites in the olden times.

The Second Reading tells us that our joy is based on our own crucifixion. With Christ we are crucified to the world and the world to us. What should bother us? What is there more to suffer from? Paul assures of peace, mercy and grace (joy) if we accept this rule.

There is no happiness in keeping the law of the Jews. Paul is confident that happiness comes only through the experience of crucifixion with Christ. He rightly claims he bears the marks of Christ. Along with his successes as

missionary, he has undergone a lot of suffering.

In the Gospel, the 72 disciples are very happy to report their successes. They have been commissioned and empowered to share in the mission of Christ.

They have succeeded in healing the sick, casting out demons, proclaiming the kingdom of God. Wow!

Poisonous snakes and scorpions do not do them harm. Wow!

The disciples have been successful because precisely they must have followed his instructions.

As the disciples rejoice, Jesus brings them to a higher level. He tells them, "Rejoice not because those things are subject to you, but because your names are written in heaven."

The disciples should rejoice because Jesus will give them fullness of life.

The church workers, ministers, servant leaders, priests and nuns should not complain when they encounter sufferings. They have authority from God to serve. They are commissioned by legitimate church authorities.

They must be able to accept and face those who differ from their opinions or resist their proddings. Some people are fast learners; others slow learners, and still others do not learn at all!

The disciples must also be secure in their faith, that their happiness in serving the Lord is not in the successes, but in their crucifixion.

They should believe that only after having sweat out a lot and suffered that the Lord assures us of heaven.

Stay out of the church if you do not want to be crucified!

In the eucharist, we celebrate our small successes and accomplishments. In one way or another, we have succeeded in changing our lives. We have made difference in the lives of others.

Here in the eucharist, Jesus assures us of greater happiness if we receive his body and blood in the forms of bread and wine.

The eucharist is also our food that will keep us always close to Jesus in our mission work.

-Prepared by Fr. Cielo Almazan, OFM

III. OUR CONTEXT

1. In your parish evangelization, what are sources of your joys and celebrations. Mention as many as possible.

2. Make a personal accounting of your successes and failures or difficulties since the time you have started your bible study sessions. Offer all these to the Lord. (HM)