

14 Sunday in Ordinary Time, C

One of the common expressions is "getting on a high." It is a term used to describe a feeling of happiness or euphoria. Most often, I think, the reference is to a sensation stimulated by the use of drugs. Today for a few moments, I would like to rescue that term and attempt to show that it has another and a more legitimate meaning.

Our Gospel reading tells about a group of people who were on a literal high. Luke says they were "rejoicing." Their joy was overflowing. But they were not spaced - out on drugs; neither they had gotten a raise in salary nor inherited a fortune. They had simply done something useful with their lives.

These were the seventy-two people whom Jesus sends out in pairs to the towns and villages that he planned to visit. No doubt, they had gone fearfully; but they had gone. And the most amazing thing happened, their presence in those towns and villages had made a real difference in the lives of people. They had achieved something worthwhile.

Today I would like to recover for myself and for you this same kind of experience. It is the highest possible happiness known to man. Deep within every one of us is the need to achieve and accomplish; and unless we do that, we are to lead frustrated and miserable lives.

First, we have to consider the need to do something worthwhile with ourselves. Jesus told his followers to rejoice in the fact that their names were written in heaven. What does it mean? I suppose it implies the

prospect of going there, but also implies the possibility of becoming someone fit to live there. This is life's main responsibility - to do something worthwhile with ourselves. One of the poets called this world "the land of soul making." And that is the first thing that every one of us has at hand, to build a true character, a strong personality that has upon it the stamp of heaven. If the primary purpose of our living is ease and comfort, pleasure and profit, then much of life is in conflict with that purpose. But once we decide that the primary purpose of our living is to become a real person, to build the kind of character that is suitable for heavenly citizenship, then unpleasant experiences have meaning. Strength is a by - product of struggle. Courage comes when we meet calamity face to face and walk through it with our heads held high. If you and I want above all else to make something worthwhile of ourselves, then trouble is not an intruder. It is a very stuff of which character is made.

Come further now and note the potential for happiness when we approach our work with this same spirit. To do something worth doing for the sake of doing it is one of the surest sources of satisfaction in human life.

We sweep floors, cook meals, and wash clothes. We work in factories or plow fields.

Most of our manufactured consumer goods come from the efforts of assembly line workers. I suspect that what most of us need is not a

different job but a different view of the job that we now have. Recognize the worth and dignities of all honorable work, then do your job to the best of your ability, and you may be surprised at the satisfaction it offers.

Then of course, we all have more work to do than that which we call our job. There are also homes to be built. We tend to forget that. Great homes never just happen; someone has to build them. No task on earth is more important or calls for more patience, wisdom, and creativity. The same can be said of our church. It is here to serve us and to be served by us. You need your church, but your church also needs you. It is not a finished and finalized institution. We must build it; and we will never really be happening in it or with it until we become a part of that creative task. This church is a place where you can invest yourself and do work worth doing for the pure joy of doing it.

Finally, let us keep in mind that when we are creating, building, and doing, we are in business with God. Those seventy-two disciples went to the places that Jesus himself planned to go. They were forerunners, initiating the work that would continue. So it is with us. All worthwhile work in some way belongs to the kingdom of God. It was started before we got here; it will continue after we are gone. But we have the opportunity to make our contribution now.

Do that. Put your hand to the task. There is no other happiness that can compare with the realization that you are doing something useful

with your life. Those early disciples were rejoicing; you and I can be the same. **Amen.**