Homily for the Third Sunday in Ordinary time 2026 Year A

"There is one thing I have asked of the Lord and for this I long, to live in the House of the Lord all the days of my life."

Those beautiful words from the 23rd Psalm perfectly expresses the longing and the goal of every single human heart, which is to be united with God forever.

According to our differing beliefs, we may express it or describe it in different ways. We may paint different pictures, but what it boils down to is that we seek completion, the utter fulfilment of every facet of our human nature, that nothing this side of eternity can perfectly fulfil.

The most beautiful and sublime human experiences that we can have in this mortal life are flawed, for they always leave us wanting more. The taste, the appetite, or the capacity that we have for perfect happiness can only be filled by God himself.

A great deal of unhappiness in our lives is because we fail to understand and accept that.

Each one of us has a God-given longing for God himself, but sometimes we mistakenly focus it upon false or lesser gods of our own making that can never ultimately satisfy us.

Saint Augustine, one of the great Saints of the church, made that mistake. After years of self-indulgence, even fathering a child outside of marriage, he confessed his mistake in the beautiful and well-known prayer, "Oh God you made us for Yourself and our hearts are forever restless until they finally rest in Thee."

That restlessness of heart he refers to is there in every single one of us and it can affect us in different ways. It could have a negative effect as we search for more and more, (be it drinks, drugs, sex, or love), to satisfy and to fill up that deep void, that restless yearning of the heart that we all have within us.

It is a very human trait, but once we have tasted the sweetness, the joy, and the pleasure of something, (and that can be legitimate pleasures as well), we will not let it go. Our restless hearts seek to be sated by more and more of the same thing.

However, it never works, for the limitations and the very transient of all human experiences do not ultimately satisfy. Rather they feed our restlessness and, if we are not careful, we are caught up in a vicious spiral of self-satisfaction. The more we have of something, the more we want, and more is never enough.

This restlessness, this perpetual yearning of the human heart can also have a very positive effect, for it can teach us an important lesson about our created human nature.

All of us have learnt the sometimes-hard lesson through the experiences that we have had in our lives, that everything passes. Nothing ever fully satisfies us, not even the most profound and beautiful of experiences, be they physical or spiritual.

Our memories of our beautiful experiences sustain us, and we hope for more of the same, but we also know from our experience in our heart of hearts that it will never be enough and never can be enough. Why is that?

The human soul, the human spirit and the human heart have an infinite capacity, that only the infinite God can satisfy.

All created things are finite and limited, and they change, fade, and ultimately pass away.

The goodness and the beauty of them delights the human spirit, but it is a finite delight. The human spirit is focused upon, is destined for, and has a taste for infinite perfect delight.

Whether we consciously articulate it or not, our hearts, our souls and our whole beings have this God-given desire, “To live in the House of the Lord all the days of our lives.”

Not just this earthly life, but the eternal life to come. It is great wisdom to understand and accept that every single experience or beauty that dazzles the eye here on earth is but a small foretaste of the all-encompassing beauty that is God. Every small experience of love and affection that warms and delights our heart is but a foretaste of the total all-embracing experience of love that is God.

Every limited, finite, and human experience that comforts and sustains the life of the spirit within, us points to an infinite depth of that same experience in God himself. We are made to be filled by God, nothing less.

If you can understand that and accept that, then it can be a tremendous help to you when those things that we have set our hearts on ultimately disappoint us or fail us.

So many people cannot endure that terrible emptiness, that void left by disappointed hopes and expectations. They frantically try to fill up that void and tip over into the area of self-indulgence and sin.

Instead of doing that, we can help ourselves an awful lot if we can focus upon that void, that dissatisfaction, that yearning restlessness that is within us and wake up to the fact that it can never be fully satisfied this side of eternity, with anything less than God himself.

But it has a point and a purpose. We must learn that we have to live with just small, finite snatches of beauty, love and joy and that the reality that our dreams and goals will never fully satisfy us, (even if we are lucky enough to achieve them).

We must learn to live with that restlessness and yearning, that perpetual dissatisfaction. Its purpose is not to frustrate us, but correctly interpreted it teaches us and shows us in the unfathomable depths of our hearts that God alone can satisfy and fill.

We may not always consciously say it, or put it into words, but at the core of our being we yearn to dwell in the House of the Lord all the days of our lives.