

Fourth Sunday of the Year

The secret of happiness

INTRODUCTION

God our father wants us all to be happy, but lasting happiness comes from inside us, when our hearts are filled with love and goodness. Today we hear Jesus explaining the secret of finding such happiness.

SIGN OF THE CROSS

LIGHT THE CANDLES

Sing the Candle Song together.

SORRY

Sing Sorry Song 1: *Dear Lord Jesus hear our prayers.*

GLORIA

GOSPEL ACCLAMATION

To welcome today's Gospel sing Acclamation 1: *Share your word with us.*

GOSPEL (cf Matthew 5:1-12)

One day when Jesus was being followed by a large crowd, he climbed a hillside, sat down, and began to speak:

Happy are gentle people,
for they shall be treated with gentleness.
Happy are people who forgive others,
for they shall be forgiven.
Happy are the poor for they shall see Heaven.
Happy are people who do what is right
and care about others.
Happy are people who make peace
and bring friendship.
Be happy even if people are unkind
and say nasty things to you,
because you believe in me,
for you will have great rewards in Heaven.

DISCUSSION

Imagine if you could have anything you wanted to make you feel happy, what would you choose?

Would such feelings of happiness last forever?

Jesus wanted to give us some 'guidelines' to follow which can make us truly happy. This happiness will stay in our hearts forever. Think of a train rattling along a track. What would happen if the track was broken or suddenly ended? These guidelines keep us on the 'track' to happiness. Without this 'track' our journey would be much harder, and we might lose our way.

Jesus often used stories called parables to explain what he meant. (Choose one parable to

talk about in detail, or give a brief outline of each example and discuss what we learn from them).

1. Happy are the poor. (cf Luke 16:19-25)

There was once a rich man who lived in a large house and had everything he wanted. On the street outside his house lived a poor man called Lazarus who had nothing. Lazarus died and went to Heaven, and the rich man died and went to Hell. God said to the rich man, 'When you were alive you had everything, but you did not share with poor Lazarus. Now it is the turn of Lazarus to be happy and for you to be miserable.'

2. Happy are those who do what is right. (cf Luke 10:30-35)

One day a man was travelling from Jerusalem to Jericho, when a gang of robbers attacked him. They stole everything he had and after beating him, they left him to die. Two men passed by, but neither stopped. Finally, a man from Samaria found the man lying in the road, and was filled with pity. He bandaged his wounds and gave him a drink, before taking him to the nearest inn where he cared for him.

3. Happy are people who forgive. (cf Matthew 18:22-34)

Once there was a king who had many servants. One of these servants owed him a lot of money and could not pay him back. The king was ready to punish him, but the servant begged for mercy, and the king forgave him his debt. Later, this servant met another man who owed him a small amount of money. The man could not pay and asked the servant for mercy. The servant was furious and had him thrown into jail. When the king heard of this, he sent for the servant that he had forgiven. 'You asked me for mercy and I forgave you,' the king said. 'Could you not also be forgiving towards this other man?' The king had his servant thrown into jail until he paid back all that he owed.

ACTIVITY

Make a 'Happiness train' with a picture of each child riding on board.

CREED

CLOSING PRAYER

Jesus,
you shared the secret
of everlasting happiness with us,
and showed us how to find and keep it.
Help us to live by your 'guidelines'
and to share this happiness with others.