**HOW BLESSED YOU ARE**

Often, the word “blessed” is translated by “happy”, but "happy" isn't the right word. The English word is tied up with good luck and bad luck, hap and mishap. It goes back to pre‑Christian times, when happiness depended on the haphazard chances and changes of life, and on material things that kind Fortune gave and cruel Fortune took away. Fortuna was a fickle Roman goddess, (un)fortunately!

Many of us would have to admit that we think the happy ones are those who are brimming over with good health, who have lots of money, have no major hassles, and have control of their own affairs. Certainly, we can pray for happiness in those terms: health, wealth, freedom from pain and trouble, and independence, provided that we pray ultimately that God’s will be done in us.

People go to great lengths to secure their happiness, and they can easily lose hold on their happiness. A collapse in health, a retrenchment at work, a deal that fell through, a promotion that didn't eventuate, even a change in the weather, can destroy the fickle happiness that the world offers us.

The Beatitudes speak not at all of happiness that depends on luck. They speak of joy that *seeks you out* through your pain. They speak of joy that sorrow and loss, pain and grief, are powerless to destroy. They speak of joy that breaks through your tears, and joy that nothing in life or death can take away from you. They are an invitation to understand that “there is joy” where there isn’t any likelihood of it in human terms, and it is a priceless gift of God.

This joy is not produced by material goods, even mountains of gifts. This joy is not produced by other people, not even by our loving parents or our best friends.

Supreme joy, blessedness, comes to us when we are willing to give up *things, opportunities, and even people,* when they stand in our way to *God* and when they obstruct our loving service of God and other people.

This joy is not produced by *us*. It is given by God. "How blessed you are!" (Mt 5:1). It comes to us as the finest present of all, God's very own gift to us. Its creative power breaks into our pain and darkness, and it makes us joyful at the core of our being, truly blessed.

Can someone who is poor, dependent, or suffering, be truly happy? Most people would say no. But Jesus tells us, in the gospel of the Beatitudes (Mt 5:1-12a), and in his whole way of life, that the only happiness worth yearning for is a heart renewed by *his* attitudes.

How happy you are, when you espouse each other, because you believe that your spouse is worthy of your lifelong love and care.

How joyful you are when you face the difficulties of your life together with courage, patience, and constancy.

How blessed you are when you are willing to endure suffering for the sake of each other, and for your children, and for many other people as well.

Jesus brings to the world a new sense of what is worthwhile: a new relationship with God and with others. He communicates his own Spirit to us.

When we live in the spirit of the Beatitudes, everlasting joy is ours already. And so may it be. May the Lord bless you and keep you. May he show his face to you and have mercy on you. May he smile on you and give you his love, joy, and peace.