

20 Pentecost
October 18, 2009
Fr. Bill McGinty

“Happiness is...”

When I read this section of the Book of Job, where God replies to Job, I always think of Bill Maher. You see Bill is not just an atheist but he goes out of his way to offend Christians and believers in every way he can.

We need Bill Maher, because the more we hear him abuse religion, the more we realize, that we have a Gospel to proclaim and a faith to witness to.

This week, thinking of this passage from the Book of Job, I have a question for you. Are you happy? It is a question that Job never had to ask himself until misfortune befell him. Now sitting suffering and having lost everything, Job begins for the first time to question his own existence, and where he fits in, in the order of things. They are questions he has never asked himself before, he never needed to. He was wealthy, successful and his family had flourished. Now he questions even God.

God’s reply is to reverse Job’s questions and send back some rhetorical questions of his own, such as “Where were you when I laid the Foundation of the earth?”

There are no answers to God’s question, it is clear to Job that God is God and he is a mere creature. Creatures cannot question their creator.

So once again, I have to ask you, are you happy? Because it seems to me that happiness should be some how tied up with achieving what we want out of life. To truly know whether we are happy, we need a vision of where we are going and what we seek in life.

Most artists and musicians I meet seem to be happy people. Maybe they are happy because they have an end product- a picture or a piece of music they have produced or mastered. For the rest of us, happiness is never always that simple. At home, we know that happiness is somehow tied up with, leaving the toilet seat down, pushing in your chair, not leaving toothpaste in the sink, taking out smelly garbage and listening to why her boss gave her a catty remark, while you are listening to the six o’clock news about Iran having an Atom bomb.

Happiness can be the kids going back to college, the grandchildren leaving mid-day on Sunday or a simple weekend where nothing is scheduled, no one is coming and you sit and do nothing.

Happiness for me is knowing that the Bill Mahers are wrong and that deep within each one of us is a soul and a thing of beauty. We are beautiful because we are created, and we create because we are like him our father who created us in his image.

So yesterday, a plan came together that had been hatched over the last eight months. “The third annual Milford Fall Walkathon.” The team led by Linda Troise, to Kim Kelly, Ken Gunn, Frank Bonello Michael Elf, Cerilyn Wall, Richard Wall aided by much help on the day, pulled off a ministry to the sick, the caregiver, the parishioner and even the music enthusiast. Hours of planning, work, toil and sweat, worry came together into five hours that symbolized community, fellowship and service to one another. It was

the Gospel in action. It was “come follow me” and more. It was “greater love than this has no man that he lays down his life for his brother.”

The Walkathon created happiness. Tired, aching, self-satisfied happiness. It is why this church is here, it spoke of Gospel and community in one breathe. It was doing the Gospel as opposed to just hearing it. it was striking back against cancer and aids and saying: “Take that you nasty little disease.”

There is a happiness that comes when the long days’ ministry is over. It is the happiness of knowing that you have made a difference. The Walkathon team makes a difference and my heart swells with pride for them and what they have achieved. It is not about money, it is about the total eclipse of the heart when good people work together for a good cause.

This week also is a celebration of another ministry to this church and its people that is so necessary, consistent and relentlessly serving in terms of effort and time. That ministry is our Altar Guild, by purchasing a complete set of new vestments in memory of Helen to be used in our services and on this sanctuary. They could not have chosen a more worthy, dedicated, loving group to commemorate their mother. For Helen fits in with the character, holiness and unswerving devotion of all the women who serve this congregation week after week, 52 weeks a year, in this church. Like them, she was self-effacing, kind, loyal and dedicated to the ones she loved. Never have the Gospel words been truer when spoken of in terms of our Altar Guild:

“Whoever wishes to become great among you must be your servant and whoever wishes to be first among you, must be slave of all. For the Son of Man came not to be served, but to serve and to give his life, a ransom for many.”

Happiness is the look on the treasure’s face when the ministry of stewardship led by Fran Hlavacek succeeds in reaching the hearts of every parishioner and they respond by saying.

“I love my church and I believe in its ministries. I want the mission of Jesus Christ to succeed and I will support it as best I can. My happiness is tied up with it for Safe Haven to be a source of refuge for abused women and children, for the child care to provide care at an affordable rate for the poor families, for the heroic efforts of the food pantry to stand against desperation in the lives of so many; for the Pastoral team to be there from birth to death for all who need them.”

Happiness is the prisoner who is visited and the shut in who has someone to help, the child who has a quilt made for them; happiness is knowing you have sisters who are also daughters, to help you through the tough times.

Happiness is knowing that God who redeemed us by sending us his Son, Our Lord Jesus Christ, truly dwells among us. We gather not just to worship and pray but also to celebrate that the mission of the church is being accomplished, the Gospel is being proclaimed and that Christ’s ministry is being continued by so many who seek their own happiness in choosing to serve others during the week.

And that should make each one of us happy. It makes God happy for that is why he created us that we might walk in his ways.

Amen+