

Homily for the 22nd Sunday in Ordinary Time

Would you like to be in a good mood every day? Without reading your minds, I'm going to guess that most of you are probably thinking, "Yes, of course I would. Who wouldn't?" So, what if I told you, it was as easy as changing how you think? Well, it is! Enjoying life begins with the thoughts we choose to think. No matter what's going on in your life today, if you will choose happy, hope-filled thoughts based on God's ways, you will feel happier.

You see, your mind, mouth, moods, and attitudes are all intricately connected. First we think, and then our thoughts turn into words that we speak, and then the two of them together affect us emotionally and turn into moods and attitudes. Most of us pay no attention to what we're thinking as we go throughout the day, though, and so we don't even make the connection between our thoughts and the rest of our life. But it's true. Think of your mind like the gas tank in your car. Your car will run well, or perhaps not even run at all, depending on what kind of fuel you put into it. In the same way, putting negative thoughts into our minds results in negative attitudes and behaviors. But, when we choose our thoughts carefully, and seek to think encouraging thoughts, our quality of life can really improve!

So, what's the catch? Well, as I said earlier: "if you will choose happy, hope-filled thoughts based on God's ways, you will feel happier". And there's the catch – *God's ways*. We have to choose thoughts that are of God and not of anything else, including the world, the flesh, or the devil.

Just look at our Scripture readings today. In the first reading, God called Job to bring a difficult message of truth to the people around him. And he was persecuted for it. Really, he felt like he was between a rock and a hard place. On the one hand, he was ridiculed for being faithful to what God asked him to do. And on the other, if he didn't speak the truth, then it would have become like a burning fire within his heart that would have just gnawed at him. Or in the Gospel today, Peter thinks he's helping Jesus by trying to block Him from enduring His coming passion and death on the cross. But, Jesus chastises Peter, saying, "You are thinking not as God does, but as human beings do."

Yes, as Scripture tells us, God's ways are not our ways. And God's thoughts are often not our thoughts. Just look at how God chose to redeem us – by the death of His Son, whom He raised from the dead! But it's precisely through Jesus that we are offered a new way of living, starting with how we think. In fact, St. Paul confirms this in our second reading today, writing: "Do not conform yourselves to this age but be transformed by the renewal of your mind, that you may discern what is the will of God, what is good and pleasing and perfect."

These words are so important for us to understand! God has a good, acceptable, and perfect plan for you and me, and the way we can experience it is not to think like the world thinks, but to be changed entirely by learning to renew our mind and think the way God thinks. If you want to have what God wants you to have, learn to think like God thinks!

And how do we do this? By praying each day, in particular, by filling our minds with the truth about what God says about us. If you were here last week, I shared that we included in last week's bulletin a list of significant verses from the Scriptures about our identity in Christ – who we are in Him. If you didn't get that list last week, it'll be on the parish website under the "Pastor's Page". I highly encourage you to read through these statements each day during your prayer time so that you can fill your mind with God's revealed truth – what He says about you! And by filling our minds with God's truth, and not the lies or half-truths of the world, the flesh, or the devil, we enable ourselves to more readily choose to think and speak the positive, faith-filled things He says about our lives.

Renewing our mind, mouth, moods, and attitudes isn't always easy, but it's possible with God's help. If you desire greater emotional stability, and the ability to maintain a consistently good attitude no matter what your circumstances are, then make it a goal and don't give up until you have reached it. A walk begins with one step and then another and another. No matter how long your journey seems, if you take enough steps in the right direction, you will eventually arrive at your desired destination. God bless you.