



HOMILY BY FR MICHAEL GATHUKU
17TH OCTOBER 2021
29TH SUNDAY IN ORDINARY TIME.

Why did God create us? When we were young, we learned that God created us to know, love, and serve the lord so that when we die, we shall be with him in heaven, simple teaching but it sounds true.

We all pursue happiness in our life in one way or another. Our quest of happiness revolves around, what I would call 3Ps: Namely Pleasure, Possession, and Power. Pleasure which is the capacity to enjoy positive mental and physical states. Possession which is the ability to have access to the fundamental needs of human beings. And power which is the likelihood to have intervention over the environment and people around us.

The 3 P's do contribute to human happiness but when they are exaggerated, and they are our point of focus they could leave us unhappy and unfulfilled. The 3ps should be sought in God purpose of our creation.

If the 3ps are sought as needs for fulfilment and be closer to God it's okay, but there is a struggle: to balance our need and want for pleasure, possession, and power.

If we have been following the gospel readings of the last three Sundays, from the Gospel of Mark, chapter 10, we notice the reflection of these 3ps. If possible, read mark chapter 10 in entirety.

On 27th Sunday (Mk 10:2-16) invited us to reflect on marriage and family: Christian marriage is not to be based on the sole principle of pleasure, but on faithfulness and love.

The gospel on 28th Sunday (the last Sunday: Mk 10:17-30) was on the inability of the rich man to be a disciple of Jesus because of his possessions. Christian life is to be based on detachment and simplicity.

Today's Gospel reading (MK 10:35-45) invites us to reflect on power. As Christians we influence our environment not through power and control, but in service and willingness to suffer.

The underlying theme here is Discipleship – A part of the Mark reading, which we didn't read is 10:32 which talks about Jesus' prediction about His own death

Mark talks of Jesus making his final journey to Jerusalem and prediction of his coming suffering and death, he told His followers what is going to happen to Him (Namely he will be condemned and put to death).

Incentive of Jesus prediction and sufferings awaiting him.

James and John's son of Zebedee, approach Jesus with a request to share in his power (v.37): "Allow us to sit one at your right hand and the other at your left in your glory." This request did not go well with other disciples we are told they were indignant.

> "When the other ten heard this, they were indignant with James and John", because most likely the other apostles had a vested interest to a share in what they supposed to be the political 'power' of Jesus

Jesus' message to the two and the rest is clear and consistent, he had an objective, and His objective was to do His fathers will no matter what.

He has made a choice to save the world by being a suffering servant, as Isaiah proclaims in today's first reading (Is 53). Jesus could have saved the world by an impressive show of power by working miracles, but that was far from his fathers will.

This would be against the Will of God, his Father. In the beginning, God willed to create human beings with their free will, and God cannot go against His own will. Therefore, the Kingdom of God (the reign of God which is of love, peace, and joy) cannot be established through political power, but only through the transformation of human hearts.

The disciples of Jesus – including James and John, and the other apostles, we too – must be willing to share in the cup of suffering.

Yes, power for a disciple of Jesus is the inner strength that makes it possible to serve and to suffer. This does not mean that we go around looking for trouble. Nor do we take pleasure in suffering. Suffering will remain suffering. But the fact that God in the person of Jesus himself had to suffer gives us the strength to bear the suffering. Human suffering does have meaning, when borne out of love.

Yes, Christian suffering is not a hopeless endeavour.

Resurrection will follow the suffering and death. But this is purely the grace of God:

We do know people whose idea of service is the same as autocracy. People who are insecure, people who subject others to their demands, they make sure their authority is keenly felt.

Jesus was different, he serves rather than being served, he gave his life freely, and he reached those in the fringe of the society.

Like the case of Jesus Christian discipleship is service. Jesus followers are those who forget their position to minister to the needs of all.

That is what it means to drink Jesus' Cup.