

Blessed be God who animates our lives and causes us to rejoice, to rejoice for all creation, for the gift of our lives and for the life of Cassie Latimer.

AMEN

Today I want to speak to you of joy, not giddiness or superficial happiness, not satisfaction of bodily desires or mere bliss.

The joy of which I speak today is not the opposite of sadness but its sacred companion. It is after all, often triggered by or manifested in tears, the heartwater of our lives. It is often triggered by memory especially when we say good bye to a dear friend.

The joy of which I speak is the radiant and thorough.

I want us today to focus on the deep joy which is at the heart of our faith, revealed in the Paschal Mystery, and celebrated at every Eucharist, at every funeral.

Joy is the serious business of Heaven said CS Lewis.

And when we think of Cassie Latimer, her life on earth and her eternal life now, it is my hope we will think of joy...the joy of heaven, the joy which comes in the morning, the joy of praising and abiding in God.

How, you might ask, do we get to joy with this lectionary, these prophetic admonitions, on a day when we remember one among us who has died in the hope of the resurrection!

If we look carefully each reading today calls us to rejoice.

Nehemiah reminds us that there is actually great joy in the law. When taken as the gift intended by God the law and the prophets cause us to live the kind of life which realizes those transports of delight which cause us to rejoice in the Lord always. When we gather, when we pray together, when we lift up our eyes from whence cometh our salvation.

Psalm 19 is considered a poem which offers testimony to the development of our joyful identity in God. God creates and is revealed in the heavens and on earth that we might respond with praise and thanksgiving. This is a song of gratitude and gratitude supports and incites joy.

Paul's letter offers the classic litany of gifts of the Holy Spirit enabling each of us when recognizing our own gifts to behave and become who we truly are. This is a joyful thing.

And finally the Gospel, Jesus' first sermon, more about gesture than original thinking. In his confident delivery he provides us with a holy gesture which focuses us on the central focus of his ministry which is also ours. JOY, deep joy, comes from living into our Baptismal covenant in which we are all anointed to Bring good news to the poor, proclaim release to the captives and recovery of sight to the blind, to let the oppressed go free, and to proclaim the year of the Lord's favor. When we realize this call, we witness that singular confident jubilant moment when Jesus rolls up the scroll and assures us the Scripture has been fulfilled.

Scripture has been fulfilled today in part and in your hearing when we realize that Cassie led a full, complete, humble, devoted life, allowing herself to be led right into heaven! That is Joy

As we heard in the Hymn just sung we ask the Precious Lord to take our hand. We allow ourselves to be led. We practice our faith when we follow Jesus, through the dark, through the storm, ...He will lead us joyfully HOME

I did not know Cassie Latimer, at least not when she lived on this earth. I have come to know her through your eyes, through your stories, and through a mystical presence in this sanctuary.

God on the other hand has always and will always know her...the same way God knew us before we were born and cradles us after we die. God's knowing is not rational knowledge as we understand it but is the creative imaginative participation in someone's very being.

When God knows just as when God creates, there is joy...it is a good and joyful thing always and everywhere!

Joy is the serious business of heaven: CS LEWIS

Joy comes in the morning

Joy is the fulfillment of a life well lived a human come fully alive

Joy is the word which comes to me this morning as we celebrate the life of Cassie Latimer.

And what is so very important today is that this celebration of her life is uniquely crafted to meet and honor her humility and generosity.

Humility and generosity are two of the pillars of Joy, not pleasure, not happiness, but Joy. The Easter variety, the resurrection kind.

It is believed that St Francis said: Preach the Gospel at all times...if necessary use words.

I was reminded of this motto when I first heard about Cassie; and then again when I pondered today's Gospel.

Like Cassie, Jesus so humbly and so simply offers in his first sermon, the beautiful words of the prophet Isaiah.

Nothing extraneous, nothing wasted, more gesture than words, more presence than superficiality.

There is joy in this prophecy. Joy in being anointed, joy in practicing our faith by...

Joy in the knowledge that "this day the prophecy has been fulfilled"

Joy comes from affirming the goodness of the Lord.

Cassie lived that life of compassion and affirmation.

The irony for us is that we too feel joy, in the midst of sorrow, that one so true and humble has gone before us.

Our hope is kindled, our hearts are warmed.

There is a kind of kinship which is felt at times like this, belonging to a family of God's children. We will remain united always through our memories and by our faith with those like Cassie who have realized complete Joy.

All of this operationalizes our mission statement which too is simple and to the point: We are called to be one with God and with each other by living the Gospel with Love and Compassion.

And so, in assuring us of that unity and love which God offers to all, I leave you with the blessing which I have offered before and will offer again because it goes right to the heart of Joy which is belovedness. Bishop Desmond Tutu spoke it on his departure from Darum Sala where he met with the Dalai Llama on Joy:

Dear Child of God you are loved with a love that nothing can shake, a love that loved you long before you were created, a love that will be there long after everything has disappeared. You are precious with a preciousness that is totally quite immeasurable. And God wants you to be like God. Filled with life and goodness and laughter - and JOY!

God who is forever pouring out God's whole being from all eternity, wants you to flourish. God wants you to be filled with excitement and joy and ever longing to be able to find what is so beautiful in God's creation: the compassion of so many, the caring, the sharing. And God says: Please my child help me. Help me to spread love and laughter and joy and compassion. And you know what my child? As you do this - hey presto- you discover joy. Joy which you had not sought comes as the gift as almost the reward for this non self regarding caring for others. (Book of Joy 297)

Our Pillar of Joy: Remembering Cassie Latimer
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