

### 3<sup>rd</sup> Week of Advent – 13 December 2009

Some years ago there was a sports advertisement on TV. And I don't even remember what product they were trying to sell, maybe it was Gatorade, but what I do remember is that in the commercial, you see these people playing a particular sport and they are pushing themselves hard and they are covered in sweat. And then you hear a voice ask the question, "Do you have the love?" Do you have the love? When I played in pick up basketball games in the states, whenever there was a guy who wasn't running hard up and down the court and not playing hard, the other teammates would start to get on the guy saying, "Where's the love?" In other words they were asking, where is your passion and desire? And you know, really that is an interesting question. Of course, what the commercial was getting at is that if you are going to play a sport and excel at it, you need to have love and passion for the sport, you have to give it your all. If you are going to work hard at something and stick with it so as to reach your greatest potential, you have to have "the love," so that you will remain dedicated and persistent in pursuing excellence, otherwise, you are just going to give up.

Of course this is true not only in the realm of sports, but this is true for just about anything that's really worth having in life. If you want to do well at work, or get good grades in school, you have to work for it. The Christian life is no different. When it comes to living the Christian life, if you want to do it and do it well, you have to work at it. Therefore, in regards to living the Christian life, we must also ask ourselves, "Do we have the love?" And when you think about that question, what it is that you are really asking yourself is this, what motivates you? What is it that you want most out of life? And if you are going to be honest, then you have to admit, what we all really want out of life is happiness. We all want happiness. That is what our actions are geared towards, we pursue the things in life that we think are going to make us happy. But the thing is, not everyone defines happiness the same way.

Camille Pauley, who is president and cofounder of a nonprofit organization called 'Healing the Culture' which is dedicated to building a pro-life culture and help people live for a deeper meaning and purpose, she has done research in this area, and she says that there are four levels of happiness. The first level is physical pleasure and possessions. Pleasure that you receive from your senses. And so if you eat an ice cream cone, or play a video game or buy a new truck, these are things that we do for the sake of pleasure to bring us happiness. Its instant gratification. The second level of happiness is ego gratification. Achievement, winning, popularity are examples of this level. So if I play a sport and win a trophy, if I get a job promotion, these things bring us an ego gratification level of happiness. The third level of happiness is helping others, doing good for other people, like doing volunteer work for the poor for example. And finally, the fourth level of happiness is the ultimate good, loving God, which is like level three, except with your eye on the eternal.

When it comes to the first two levels of happiness, these things are not bad in and of itself. God has given us these levels of happiness so as to give us a small taste of what awaits us in heaven. The problem with these two levels is first of all, they don't last. When you are done eating the ice cream cone, the happiness fades quickly. The job promotion doesn't make us happy forever either. In addition to that these two levels of happiness are centered totally on the self. You have to realize, it is not a problem to enjoy these things for yourself in certain

circumstances, the problem is when people never move beyond these first two levels of happiness, then they end up living only for themselves. Their sole motivation of action becomes what brings me pleasure and gratification. Its all about me. And when that happens it leaves people feeling depressed because the happiness they long for they never really get much of because its only for a fleeting moment and is gone, and they are left feeling empty inside. It never satisfies or fulfills. Level three and four on the other hand is other focused and it lasts much longer. With level three however, even though it does last a long time and is satisfying to a point, it still doesn't last forever. The only level that truly brings us to our greatest satisfaction and fulfillment is level four, loving God.

Its only when we discover levels three and four of happiness that we will be able to find deep meaning and happiness. This is why in today's Gospel John the Baptist is preparing the people for the coming of the Lord by exhorting them to act justly toward one another. By getting people to seek after a deeper level of happiness, they then will be prepared to accept the Lord when he comes. And if we accept the Lord and seek after him, then we can truly live out the Christian life in good times and in bad because we know that the object of our happiness which we will be willing to work for, to struggle for, to even sacrifice for, is found in God. And when we have God, even if we are in the midst of strife, then we have real joy and happiness. And so we don't give up, and we don't have an apathetic approach to our faith. Its those moments then that we can honestly say, we have the love, when it comes to the Christian life. And so now its up to you, do you want it? What is your motivation, your passion and desire? What are you living for? Do you see that the Christian life is worth it? Do you have the love?

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