

"The Dance that Never Ends"

Homily of January 18, 2004

by Fr. Gerry Murphy

. . . . you shall be called "My Delight". . . and so shall your God rejoice in you

In my ministry as a priest I meet all kinds of people in all kinds of situations: in the emergency room at 2am in the morning; in the confessional on a Saturday afternoon; in a counseling room at the rectory. . . . I look into the eyes and listen to the heart of wounded humanity:

Father, I am sitting here alone with a razor blade in my hand and I am about to slit my wrists. Can I come and talk to you?

Father, my boyfriend is putting tremendous pressure on me to have an abortion. I feel so lost, confused and alone. What should I do?

Father, I feel my life is worthless, pointless and going nowhere. What is it all about? Please tell me.

Father, I have deeply hurt the person I love the most, and even though she has forgiven me, I cannot forgive myself. Please help me.

And as I look into the eyes and peer into the soul of wounded humanity, I sometimes wonder: where, my dear friend, along the journey of your life, did you lose sight of God's delight in you. And how, my dear friend, can I help you to rediscover your tremendous dignity, beauty and value, no matter what you have done or what you are suffering right now?

Sometimes in our lives we do things that are reckless, irresponsible and selfish. And yet God delights and rejoices in us. Sometimes in our lives we do violence to our mind, body and spirit. And yet God delights and rejoices in us. Sometimes in our lives we lose our way and drift helplessly in a fog of confusion and despair. And yet God delights and rejoices in us. Sometimes in our lives we lock ourselves in emotional prisons of anger, bitterness and resentment. We even throw away the key. And yet God delights and rejoices in us.

How do you describe your relationship with God? Do you consider God a father? A mother? Do you think primarily of Jesus when you pray? Is God a trusted friend to you? Or a judge? Is God the supreme authority figure in your life? Or is God some kind of absent magician who every now and then miraculously rescues you in times of trouble? Who is God in your life?

In our first reading from Isaiah, we are told that God's relationship to us is like groom to bride. God's love for us is so intense, God's delight in us so real, that the only metaphor the prophet can use is that of a newly married couple. Who would dare speak of the relationship between God and humanity this way? Well, God would.

Our experience of God changes as we journey through life. As we grow, we come to understand God more deeply through the events of our lives. Some of these events challenge our perceptions of God. Others affirm those images.

Everyone goes through a spiritual desert from time to time. We call this desolation. We feel like God is a million miles away or imagine that God has forsaken and abandoned us. But God never abandons us. Sometimes we are so lost in our pain and anguish that we cannot feel the warmth of God's love.

What we should never forget is that God's heart dances with joy and delight at the very thought of each one of us. The question is: do we delight and rejoice in who we are? Do we delight and rejoice in each other in spite of our differences and disagreements? Do we delight and rejoice in the beauty of creation?

And as I look into the eyes and peer into the soul of wounded humanity, I think I hear God say: *Come my lost and lonely one, let my spirit breathe. Let me show you who you are - bright, beautiful and free. Come my lost and lonely one, come my battered friend, let me teach you how to dance with me, a dance that never ends.*