

I would like to take this opportunity to express our love and gratitude to all the front-liners: from the healthcare professionals, members of the law enforcement agencies and first responders, delivery workers, grocery store employees, and all those who are working behind the scene in this pandemic. Much love and appreciation for all your efforts and selfless acts.

Today is the 3rd Sunday of Easter. Two Sundays have passed since the Easter Sunday. It's been 30plus days since we have heard the "shelter in place" recommendation from the authorities. Most of us, if not all, are bored, anxious, and confused at this time.

We can pretty much relate to the two depressed disciples, who were leaving the company of apostles and believers in Jerusalem and head for Emmaus, whom we have heard from our Gospel today. Just like Cleopas and his friend who were trying to distance themselves from the scandalous disaster that befell the apostles and followers of Jesus with the shameful death of their master at the hands of the very Roman soldiers that they thought he had come to vanquish, most of us would like to flee from this situation.

Just like Cleopas and his friend, most of us are feeling abandoned by the Church or perhaps by God right now. Just like Cleopas and his friend, most of us are worried, worried about sustaining our daily lives: our physical and mental health. Just like Cleopas and his friend, most of us are having debates and conversation on how to address this present situation so that can we go back to our normal lives?

Just like Cleopas and his friend, most of us are trying our best to make sense of our situation, finding meaning from all of these. Just like them, we are trying to find

some sense of joy in the midst of this adversity. But it seems to be that for the most of us, this sense of joy is somewhat elusive.

Friends, allow me to share to you the words of our Holy Father, Pope Francis, that helped me personally in my struggle to find a sense of joy and happiness in the face of this adversity. He said:

"You can have flaws, be anxious, and even be angry, but do not forget that your life is the greatest enterprise in the world. Only you can stop it from going bust. Many appreciate you, admire you, and love you. Remember that to be happy is not to have a sky without a storm, a road without accidents, work without fatigue, relationships without disappointments. To be happy is to find strength in forgiveness, hope in battles, security in stage of fear, love in discord.

It is not only to enjoy the smile, but also to reflect on the sadness. It is not only to celebrate the successes, but to learn lessons from the failures. It is not only to feel happy with the applause, but to be happy in anonymity. Being happy is not a fatality of destiny, but an achievement for those who can travel within themselves.

To be happy is to stop feeling like a victim and become your destiny's author. It is to cross deserts, yet to be able to find oasis in the depths of our soul. It is to thank God for every morning, for the miracle of life. Being happy is not being afraid of your own feelings. It's to be able to talk about you. It is having courage to hear a 'no'. It is confidence in the face of criticism, even when unjustified.

It is to kiss your children, pamper your parents, to live poetic moments with friends, even when they hurt us. To be happy is to let live the creature that lives in each one of us, free, joyful, and simple. It is to have maturity to be able to say: 'I made mistakes'. It is to have the courage to say 'I am sorry.' It is to have the ability to say 'I love you.'

May your life become a garden of opportunities for happiness...that in spring may it be a lover of joy. In winter a lover of wisdom. And when you make mistake, start all over again. For only then will you be in love with your life. You will find that to be happy is not to have a perfect life. But use the tears to irrigate tolerance. Use your losses to train patience. Use pain to plaster pleasure. Use obstacles to open windows of intelligence. Never give up...Never give up on people who love you. Never give up on happiness, for life is an incredible show."

The good news is that towards the end of the Gospel we heard them said: "Were not our hearts burning within us while he spoke to us on the way and opened Scripture to us?...There eyes were opened and recognized Him...So they set out at once and returned to Jerusalem..." As St. Mother Theresa said, "If you want to change the world, go home and love your family." Let us heed the call and return to our own Jerusalems, to our own homes, let us open our eyes and recognize Him in our own family. Now is the appropriate time to be home and love your family. To serve one another in the name of Jesus the Christ. Many will say that the Church is empty. Maybe the building is empty. But the Church: composed of body and soul, that Church has been deployed. And that Church is you.