

August 6th, Feast of the Transfiguration

I have made several mission trips to Honduras—very important trips for me as they opened my eyes to the reality of life for the vast majority of people living in the world today.

When I visited it, Honduras was the second poorest country in the Western hemisphere. And the poverty of the people was evident everywhere: urban sprawl, shacks made of cardboard, sewerage running down the sides of the road, dirt and dust everywhere, this list goes on and on.

One thing that struck me in the midst of so much daily struggle, though, was the fact that, at least some of the time, the children laughed and played and had an exuberance that is natural to kids.

My Spanish is not too good, so I couldn't really talk with the children about what made them happy, but it was clear to me simply from observing them, that there were moments of happiness for them.

Maybe it came in the form of being able to run about freely and play with their friends. Maybe it was the love and care shown to them by their parents. Maybe it was the chance to go to school, at least for part of the day, and take part in the adventure of learning new things.

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Even in the midst of poverty there can be moments when happiness just seems to break out and things don't seem too bad. We find ourselves wanting to sing, or at least whistle, a happy tune.

In today's readings, people seem to be experiencing this same sort of occurrence: happiness breaking out all of a sudden and there's no denying it.

Daniel describes God's glory and kingship and you can feel how happy it makes him feel. It gives him a sense of security that nothing will ever take away from the fact that God is in control of life and God is good.

St Peter's letter tells the story of how, on the holy mountain, God the Father tells the disciples how much He loves the Son. I'm sure Jesus was happy to hear it. Not that he doubted it, but it's always good to be reminded of such love.

And in the Gospel Peter, James and John are so happy they want to stay with Jesus on the mountaintop and stay in that space of happiness forever.

This last story is not meant to be just about Jesus or just about the three disciples that were lucky enough to go up on the mountaintop with Jesus.

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It's a story that we all are invited to participate in.

It's true that God's presence in our lives is often hidden, and we are much more aware of his absence.

But there are those moments when God's beauty or goodness or love breaks through the surface of our everyday life, and in spite of what we are going through, we simply cannot deny it.

Such encounters with happiness may not last long, but they do help remind us that God is alive and is working on our behalf.

Much of what God does is behind the scenes and we may never notice it, but his saving and loving action is there all the same.

There are a lot of trials in life, lots of things that make us anxious, and lots of things that must be changed—things that God does not want us to suffer through anymore.

And while we are confronting all that evil that goes against God's plan, God is there, saying to each of us, "You are my beloved son, my beloved daughter."

Allowing ourselves to hear that message and to believe in the truth of it makes it possible to carry on in the midst of our suffering and of the brokenness of our world, and to work to do away

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with all that pain.

The transfiguration of Jesus on the mountaintop was not the end of the story for him—he left from there knowing that, even as God’s beloved, he would still face the cross.

But it’s easy to believe that hearing those words of love from God his Father strengthened him to face what was coming his way and to stay true to his mission until the end.

As members of his body, what God says to Jesus, he says to us. May we also find his message of love encouraging and able to support us as we work to do as Jesus did, to work for the salvation of the world.