

Homily for Ordinary Time 8A LESSON: God Is the Real Source of Happiness

In today's Gospel Jesus says we can serve either God or mammon – but not both.

Now the word "mammon," is sometimes translated as "money,"

BUT it really refers in a **general** way to **material goods and possessions** - the things money can **buy**.

What does Jesus mean? - is he saying that money and material things are **evil**?

No God created this material world, and it is **good**, full of **beauty** & God's **glory**.

So what does Jesus mean?

The key is found in the word "serve."

Serving means we submit to them, we expect a **reward** from them.

Jesus is saying that we can **put our trust in God**, OR in the **things of this world** – Pick one.

Jesus even describes what life is like when we put our trust in the **things of this world**:

Worry and stress about what you're going to eat – drink -- wear.

BUT when we **put our trust in God** we are freed from being controlled by worldly anxiety & **experience peace**.

God is **all-powerful** and **our all-loving Father** -- so it makes sense to **trust in Him**

Jesus says, "Seek first the Kingdom of **God**, and his righteousness, and all these **other things** will be given you as well."

This is why Pope Benedict XVI wrote his 2nd encyclical about Hope "**A world without God is a world without hope**,"

In this encyclical, he told the story of **St Josephine Bakhita**

Her life is an amazing, beautiful example of the hope and **confidence in God**.

At the age of nine Josephine was **kidnapped by slave-traders, beaten, and sold five times** in the slave-markets of Sudan. Eventually she was sold to a general's family, where she was **flogged** every day –

He would 'scar' her as a sign she was his property - from this she bore **144 scars** throughout her life.

Finally, in 1882, she was bought by an Italian ambassador, who brought her back to **Venice**.

Up to that time she had known only masters who maltreated her.

In Venice, she heard about **another** kind of master - the **Lord Jesus Christ**.

She learned about his **unlimited goodness and love**.

She learned that this master had himself accepted the destiny of being **flogged**

Now he was **waiting** for her "at the Father's right hand."

Now she had **hope** -- Not just the **modest** hope of finding masters who would be **less cruel**, but **hope in God**.

She said, "I am **definitively loved**, and now, whatever happens to me, **my life is good**."

The knowledge of this hope **redeemed** her: no longer a slave, she became free - a **free child of God**.

Eventually she was also **legally freed, baptized, and received as a nun**.

This love is what Christ wants **each one** of us to experience - so that we will trust Him more than mammon.

God alone satisfies; only He is able to fill our hearts.

How is Sr. Bakhita's story relevant for us today on Andros?

Knowing that God is the **true source** of happiness is the secret to **resisting temptations**.

Temptations come in **many forms**. We all face them **every day**.

We live in a **fallen world**, and that world is constantly appealing to our **lower, petty, self-centered tendencies**.

The only way to **resist** these temptations and be true to our **higher, nobler, Christian identity** is through the virtue of **hope**.

Hope is what **keeps us on the path** that leads to heaven **even when that path gets narrow and steep**

Even when enemies try to **ambush** us as we move forward.

Hope reminds us that anything **contrary** to God's will is **not good** for us or for those around us.

Temptations smile at us and promise to bring us happiness.

But they are **false promises**. They are **contrary** to God's will, and **God** is the one who knows where true happiness lies.

Remembering that is what gives us strength to **resist** these easy temptations and courageously **seek God's Kingdom first**.

And when we do that, all the **other** things we need and desire will fall into place, just as Jesus promised.