

Winter and the Tangible Presence of God

“I know you. You are the people who bring happiness,” said Phan, greeting me with a welcoming smile as she held her hands together, bowing slightly. “You always bring happiness,” she added. I was touched by Phan’s welcome and at the same time curious. I received Phan’s greeting during the St. Benedict Catholic Worker’s *We Are One Family* July 5th picnic celebration this year. This event was rooted in the belief that the family of God honors inclusivity and diversity. Over 200 families from many diverse cultures live at the Summerset Village Apartments that we serve. All belong to the family of God.

What did Phan mean when she said to me, “You are the people who bring happiness”? Did she mean a moment of joy, enjoyment, or bliss? Somehow, I knew that what she said to me held a more significant meaning. A meaning that went deeper than a feeling and one that carried wisdom.

I learned that when someone in Asian culture says, “You bring happiness” it is a high compliment that can mean you bring good fortune, joy, and overall well-being to their life. It goes beyond simple happiness and can imply that you are a source of good fortune, blessings, and prosperity, often signifying a deep and positive connection. This phrase reflects the cultural importance placed on a person’s positive impact on the lives of those around them. It highlights that your presence is beneficial and creates a positive social impact. It creates a positive ripple effect, like the feelings of happiness and well-being that are highly valued in the community.

Phan’s words, “You are the people who bring happiness,” brought a cross-cultural shared understanding of the focus of the Catholic Worker. We are people of faith bringing happiness through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy. We are people, Phan points out, whose goal is to bring the tangible presence of God. As our pastor has said, “Where God is made present through the corporal and spiritual works of mercy, people move from *lack* to *more than enough*.” They live in God’s abundance.

But winter has come, reflecting the pervasive darkness that has entered our communities. We have become a society of lack rather than abundance. Our assignment, as Phan’s wisdom taught me, is to bring the full meaning of happiness through the tangible presence of God to those who lack and long for the abundant life.

Please consider helping us bring happiness to those who are in need, sharing the abundant life with all!

Happy Christmas,
Liza Apper and the
St. Benedict Catholic Worker