

St Philip Neri is one of the most joyful saints in the history of the Church.

But his joy was not shallow.

It was not personality alone.

Not humour alone.

Not simply optimism.

His joy came from belonging completely to Christ.

And that is exactly what today's Gospel is about.

St Peter says to Jesus: **“We have left everything and followed you.”**

Everything.

And Christ does not deny the cost.

The Catholic Faith costs something.

Holiness costs something.

To follow Christ means leaving certain things behind:

- pride
- sin
- self-will
- worldly ambition
- comfort
- sometimes even reputation

And yet Jesus promises that nobody who sacrifices for Him will be left poorer in the end.

Because God cannot be outdone in generosity.

St Philip Neri understood this deeply.

He was born into a wealthy Florence family with every possibility of a comfortable life ahead of him.

Instead, he gave himself entirely to God.

He went to Rome almost unnoticed. No grand plans.

No ambition for power.

And slowly, through prayer, charity, holiness, and joy, he transformed countless souls.

Not through force.

But through sanctity.

One of the great tragedies today is that many people imagine holiness makes a person smaller, sadder, narrower.

But the saints prove the opposite.

Sin makes the soul small.

Holiness makes it alive.

St Philip laughed.

He joked.

He loved people deeply.

But beneath all of it was intense prayer and penance.

He spent hours before the Blessed Sacrament.

He heard confessions constantly.

He burned with love for Christ.

That is where his joy came from.

And today's first reading speaks about the prophets longing for salvation.

St Peter says even the prophets searched and longed to understand what has now been revealed in Christ.

And then comes the command: **“Be holy yourselves in all your conduct.”**

Not partially holy.

Not holy only at Mass.

Not holy only when convenient.

Holy in all things.

Because the Catholic Faith is not decoration added onto ordinary life.

It transforms ordinary life completely.

St Philip Neri understood that holiness begins in ordinary fidelity.

Prayer.

Confession.

Charity.

Patience.

Humility.

He famously said: **“Be good, if you can.”**

Not because holiness is optional.

But because true holiness begins humbly.

One sincere confession.

One honest prayer.

One act of charity.

One surrender of pride.

And perhaps one reason St Philip is so loved is because he understood human weakness.

He was not severe for the sake of severity.

He knew people needed encouragement.

But he also knew souls need conversion.

And so he constantly led people back to:

- prayer
- the sacraments
- simplicity
- repentance
- love of Christ

He knew the world could never satisfy the human heart.

Only God can do that.

There is a famous story that when Philip prayed for the Holy Spirit, his heart was so inflamed with divine love that it physically enlarged. Even his body could not contain the love God poured into him.

And that is the secret of sanctity.

The saints are not people who merely try harder than everyone else.

They are people who allow God to possess them more completely.

And perhaps today's Gospel asks us a direct question:

What are we still clinging to?

What do we fear losing if we belong fully to Christ?

Because Peter says: **“We have left everything.”**

And every Christian must leave something behind eventually.

Not because God wants misery.

But because He wants freedom.

A soul chained to sin, vanity, resentment, greed, lust, or pride cannot run freely toward heaven.

But Christ's promise remains astonishing.

Nobody who sacrifices for Him loses in the end.

Even now, Jesus says, there is blessing:

- deeper peace
- deeper friendship
- deeper joy
- deeper freedom

Not an easy life.

But a fruitful one.

And then eternal life besides.

St Philip Neri shows us what Catholic holiness truly looks like.

Not gloomy.  
Not theatrical.  
Not self-important.

But joyful, prayerful, sacramental, deeply human, deeply in love with Christ.

And perhaps in a world so anxious, angry, and exhausted, joyful holiness may itself become a powerful form of evangelisation.

Because people can argue with doctrines.

But they struggle to argue with a saint whose life radiates peace.

So today let us ask St Philip to pray for us:

That we may become saints without pretending.

Joyful without shallowness.

Faithful without pride.

And courageous enough to leave behind whatever still keeps us from belonging completely to Jesus Christ.