

Father John Catoir

Finding Peace

In my book "Enjoy the Lord" I proclaimed the beauty of God's unchanging love. St. Augustine (born 354 A.D., died 430 A.D.) expressed the same idea 1,500 years ago. Here's a little exercise recommended: "Think back to one of the great and happy moments of your life, a time when



you were in the bloom of health. Do you have it in mind? Imagine that moment going on and on, leaving behind all other sights and sounds. You have only this vision to ravish and absorb you in a spirit of joy. Imagine that the rest of your eternal life would be like that moment of illumination which leaves you breathless."

In this meditation, St. Augustine suggests that it is possible to begin to approximate the joys of heaven right now. We are destined for an eternity of happiness, so let us begin our journey toward the light right now.

Times change, the body grows old, people come and go, but your soul lives on forever. It is necessary at times to discern the presence of God abiding within you. The knowledge of God's love spurs you on to pray that wordless prayer called contemplation. Contemplation is the art of enjoying the Lord.

St. Teresa of Avila referred to it as the Prayer of Quiet, the art of connecting one's mind, one's body and most importantly one's will to the universal will of God. Here is what she wrote: "We cannot in spite of all our efforts procure this by ourselves. It is a form of peace in which the soul establishes herself or rather in

which God establishes the soul. All her powers are at rest. She understands, but not by the senses that she is already near her God, and if she draws a little nearer she will become one with Him, feeling great bodily comfort and a great satisfaction of the soul. Such is the happiness of the soul so close to the spring that even without drinking of the waters she finds herself refreshed."

St. Augustine also wrote about enjoying the Lord through contemplative prayer. He said it was like being lifted beyond ourselves into a Godly state of peace. "Far be it from me, O Lord, to think I am happy for any or every joy that I may remember. For there is a joy which is given to those who love Thee for Thy own sake, and this joy is Thyself." In Augustine's thinking, true joy is an awareness of the hidden radiance of God shining within us. It transcends even the happiest of earthly memories. Ultimately, we realize that the highest joy is God's gift of Himself.

St. Teresa offers her own reflections on the spiritual ascent: "Indeed, to those who are in this state ... it seems that you are no longer in this world." Both Teresa and Augustine acknowledge that these brief moments of rapture come and go, but they give us a glimpse of the sweetness of the life to come.

If you feel yourself getting caught up in the frenzy of Christmas, why not put a few minutes aside each day and enter into the Prayer of Quiet. Absorb God's love. Be still and know that God is closer to you than your own heartbeat. When you return to your daily routine, the aftertaste of this delightful visit will keep you in a state of peace and bring joy to your heart.