

Father John Catoir

The Happiness of God

In the spiritual classic, *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, Jean-Pierre de Caussade wrote the following gem: "The great and solid foundation of the spiritual life is to give oneself to God ... in such a way that the good pleasure of God and His happiness ... becomes our sole joy and good." Quite an idea!



St. Thérèse of Lisieux followed this insight in her own life. On her deathbed she said that all her actions had been performed with a single object in mind: to make God happy. She did this by offering God little deeds of kindness, which she called little flowers.

Instead of merely struggling to avoid sin, she offered God a bouquet of flowers each day. This made her happy and it emphasized the importance of her personal happiness as a way of loving God and making Him happy.

Susan Leslie, a contemplative nun living in Oxford, England, in her book, *The*

Happiness of God. Holiness of Thérèse, (Alba House, 1988) writes, "Thérèse insists that to be happy is an important way of showing our love for God, for He loves a happy soul, one perfectly attuned to Him."

This spiritual insight can help us in all kinds of circumstances. For instance, when I officiate at a wedding I try to make everyone feel welcome and happy because God delights in His family when we are happy.

First, I realize that there are non-Catholics present, and I try to put their mind at ease about when to stand and kneel. I tell them they can sit throughout the entire ceremony if it makes them more comfortable. I explain that the Mass is like an act of love; in the first part in the offertory we give ourselves to God, and at Holy Communion He gives Himself to us.

I want the congregation to enjoy the ceremony so I put the couple in full view when they exchange their vows. They stand on the top step facing the congregation, while I stand below with my back to the congregation. It gives everyone a wonderful view of their faces at that sacred moment.

Every wedding is a love story with a past, present and a future. In my homily, I speak of the parents and the sacrifices they made to help their children arrive at this day. I speak of the grace of the present moment, and explain the sacrament of matrimony and how it supplies ongoing strength for the future. However, the future is always hidden from our eyes so we must pray for the couple. In order to make it a glorious future, I explain the importance of prayer in overcoming the obstacles to their happiness.

God delights in our happiness. We can please Him on the day of a wedding and on every day if we enhance the joy of the moment by making those around us a little happier. Since God's participation in our happiness is real, why not magnify it by our conscious cooperation? It makes me think of Mary's words in the Magnificat, "My soul magnifies the Lord..." My spirit rejoices in God my Savior.

