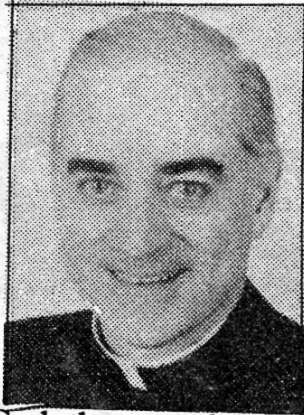


Father John Catoir

Finding Joy Amid Sorrow

Joy is possible even in the midst of sorrow. I have discovered this to be true in my own life, and I'll bet you have, too. As Christmas approaches, the notion of joy is worth pondering. How does it work? How does one find joy in the midst of sorrow? The answer is simple, joy is possible through the miracle of God's grace.



Grace is something that emanates from God the way beauty shines forth from a glorious sunset. Grace is God's personal way of giving Himself to us, but He is not visible. He comes to dazzle us with His presence but we do not see Him. We can respond to Him in faith, but faith barely suggests the magnificence of His light. God wants to lead us in the dance of life but we are not even aware of the music. That is why Jesus came to this world, to teach us how to dance.

For instance, those who make the effort to forgive everyone who has ever hurt them, simply because Jesus asked it, are more likely to experience joy than those who cling to resentment or bitterness. Bitterness harbored for a long time can strangle the joy out of us.

I know a man who was passed over for a promotion 10 years ago. The hurt was like an open wound which kept festering every day

of his life, right into his retirement. I tried to help him to forgive and forget, but he didn't seem to hear me. He didn't understand that joy is the by-product of a forgiving heart.

The importance of human cooperation in attaining joy cannot be overestimated. St. Paul said, "Rejoice always, be grateful in all circumstances." That means it is within our power to rejoice always.

What would happen if you decided to forgive all, and open your heart in gratitude to God? If you focus on gratitude there won't be much room for bitterness.

Pray for the grace to do what Jesus asked. Even if your present situation causes you on-going distress, trust God. He will give you the supernatural, miraculous, amazing grace you need to overcome the darkness.

Joy comes to those who strive to return good for evil. Bad feelings are of no consequence, pay no attention to them. Feelings are a passing emotion. Obedience to God is in the will and the will says yes or no.

Pray for all those who have ever hurt you, especially if they don't deserve it. Then you will begin to know the meaning of joy, and you will experience the dance of life in a new way.

Merry Christmas.

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