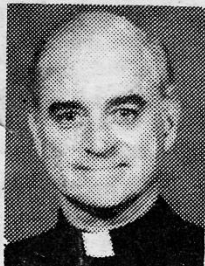


Father John Catoir

'Don't Worry, Be Happy'

There's a bouncy song by Bobby McFerrin on the air these days which has a simple message: "Don't worry, be happy. Every life will have some trouble, but when you worry you make it double."

I agree completely with the general optimism of the song but it's not always easy to be happy. This song might be good for those who worry about trivia but it would be obscene to use it to console the victim of a disaster — an earthquake or plane crash, for instance. Nevertheless, some fears can bring you down, and it's important to control fears.



HOW DOES ONE do that?

We can't control our fears directly. Fears and negative feelings tend to run their course independently of our will. However, we can

control our thoughts which in turn influence our feelings.

For instance, thoughts of danger produce feelings of anguish and fear, while thoughts of comfort and happiness tend to contribute to feelings of well-being.

In this context, faith can become an indispensable weapon against fear. Faith in God's providence gives us reason to believe that everything is going to be all right. There is a peaceable kingdom where all our wounds will be healed and all our tears will be wiped away.

WHEN JESUS SAID, "Be not anxious," he supported the idea that it is within our power to turn away from needless worry. However there are times when serious anguish takes over, as in the case of a dying spouse, a broken romance or a child on drugs. Can faith help to eliminate this type of emotional pain? Not always, at least not directly.

But even in the worst circumstance faith can raise your sights to new levels of awareness. For instance, it's comforting to realize that even when you are worrying about your spouse's good health or your child's freedom from drugs you are doing something worthwhile. You are praying. St. Augustine once wrote this consoling thought:

*For the desire of the heart is itself
your prayer.*

*And if your desire is constant, so
is your prayer.*

*...The constancy of your desire
will itself be the ceaseless voice of
your prayer.*

Worry isn't always a bad or dangerous thing. To worry is human. But we do need relief from unrelenting worry. We need to smile and laugh and forgive ourselves and begin again.

If the song, "Don Worry, Be Happy," helps you defuse your pain, good for you. Sing it often. But if the pain persists, don't worry, be happy anyway. Your prayers will be heard by a loving God who will walk along with you in your trouble.

So try not to worry. Be happy.

[For a free copy of the Christopher New Notes, Be Not Afraid, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.]