

Father John Catoir

# Our Inner Life

The spiritual life is not a thing apart from our human life; it is not a separate program added to one's day-to-day existence. But a distinction can be made between the interior life and the exterior life. On this inner life we are constantly assessing ourselves, sometimes wisely, sometimes not.



Some people have a way of being their own worst enemy. Constant self-criticism has been called the tyranny of the super-ego. "I must do this, I must do that; I must stop this or that ...," a relentless inner voice demanding perfection.

God's supreme law calls us to love our neighbor as we "love ourselves." So we all must learn to be kind to ourselves as we cling to God for support. It is simply a matter of trust. "I am weak, Lord, guide me, strengthen me. I give all to You and trust in Your love, empower me to be Your faithful servant."

Those who feverishly seek outside approval try hard to be liked; they move with the crows. It is unwise and even dangerous to put oneself at the mercy of others. We really sparkle as a Christian when we look first to God for His approval.

This is how we begin to manage our interior life: by looking first to God rather than our friends and relatives. Because

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Jesus abides in us through the grace of baptism, our Father in heaven actually looks upon us with favor: "This is my beloved son (daughter) in whom I am well pleased."

It sometimes happens that someone very dear hurts you or turns against you. "Thus afflicted, the soul strengthens itself by prayer; it is united within to One who listens from on high precisely because it is cut off externally from the praise of men." (St. Gregory the Great) It is a blessing in disguise whenever we are thrown back on ourselves, forced in some way to turn within to the One who made us, the One for whom we were made and to whom we will one day return.

The spiritual life is nothing more than one's interior life with God. The advanced soul does not need external approval to enjoy life cuddled in the arms of a loving God; all consolations come from within. This is the secret of the spiritual life: holiness is possible; one can find great joy in this life in ways hidden from the learned and clever.