

Father John Catoir

Christmas Light

It's normal to feel sad at times, especially at Christmas. Some people find the Christmas season depressing for reasons that are difficult to explain. Some experience a nostalgia for happier days when the family was all together. Others feel worthless because they are not needed as they once were. It's always important to remember that feelings are not facts. The fact is that Jesus Christ was born in Bethlehem to bring us light, happiness and eternal peace. He brought us Baptism, that indelible character which binds us to him forever in a union of love. One may not feel the warmth of God's love, but He is loving us nevertheless.



The Sacrament of Confirmation assures us the gift of God's strength on our journey through life. Our First Holy Communion and all the Communions of our lives were experiences when Christ nourished and consoled us with infinite tenderness. Jesus brought us the Sacrament of Reconciliation to wipe away our sins and make us a new creation. These are facts. We also tend to forget all the good things we have done throughout our life, cooperating with his graces year in and year out.

If you feel blue this Christmas, the most important thing to remember is that God is unchanging love. When the full meaning of this truth dawns on you, it just might awaken you from the doldrums. Your feelings may not brighten

immediately, but they will in time.

Try to "Live joyfully in all circumstances because of the knowledge of God's love," my favorite quote from Julian of Norwich. By focusing frequently on our blessings, we can learn to short circuit the blues. Once we realize that we are destined for eternal bliss, the journey through life, though tedious and painful at times, becomes more bearable. Learn to control your thoughts. The thoughts you think will always affect your emotional life, so keep them bright.

St. Augustine in his *Confessions* made this observation: "Imagine for a moment that all of nature suddenly grew still — listen and hear creation saying, 'We did not make ourselves. He made us who abides forever.'" Think of a beautiful sunset, or a mountain range capped in sparkling white majesty, or a tropical beach with its crystal blue water. All this is a reflection of God's beauty. Drink it in. When you are really down, look at an image of Jesus and hear him speaking directly to you in this way: "You are my beloved, look to me for refreshment and light. I am the way. I am your destiny, Live in my joy."

Think of your journey from infancy to childhood to adolescence and finally to adulthood. Stop and think, you did not make yourself. The One who made you abides in you, and He calls you to abide in His love. He promises eternal happiness. These are good thoughts.

You may not be able to control your emotions directly, but you can control your thoughts and when you do, your feelings will slowly move from sadness to joy.