

Father John Catoir

Live Joyfully

My Christmas gift to you this year is a spiritual one. It is contained in this quote:

"The secret of sanctity and happiness consists in but one thing, fidelity to God's will as it is manifested in the duties of the present moment." ("Abandonment to Divine Providence," Jean Pierre de Caussade, S.J.)



Living joyfully in the present moment is of course a work of grace, but since grace builds on nature, there are things we can do to make this dream come true. Here are a few suggestions:

- Don't let the past drag you down. Pray for grace to forgive everyone who has ever hurt you and forgive yourself in the process. Feelings of resentment and guilt can destroy the present moment, but you can't linger in this mood. Once you repent, God forgives and forgets. Discipline yourself to trust in God's mercy. When plagued with dark thoughts about the past, stop everything and say, "I'm not going to think about that anymore. God loves me, all will be well."

- Don't be afraid of the future. Jesus said, "Be not afraid." Living in the present moment means saying "no" to all those dark and fearful thoughts about the future. Why spoil the present? It's all you've got. In the words of St. Paul, "Whatever is true, whatever is honorable...think about these things... and the God of peace will be with you."

Philippians 4:8,9)

- Be a doer, not a worrier. Worry never baked a cake, built a bridge, or solved a problem. Fretting does little more than make a bad situation worse. If you do your best to help make this a better world, there is little danger that you will be overcome by fear of failure.

The Lord made a point of instructing us on the need to overcome fear. "Do not worry about your life...Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life? If God so clothes the grass of the field...will He not much more clothe you...Therefore do not worry...strive first for the kingdom of God and his righteousness." (Matthew 6:25,27,30,31,33)

- Try to be cheerful in all circumstances. If you act cheerfully, eventually you'll feel cheerful. Everyone must endure the unavoidable miseries of life, but cheerful acquiescence is much better than doleful resignation. Tears are necessary at times, but for those who strive to live gladly, the tears are wiped away. It's always better to deflect self-pity as soon as possible. Betty Maione of Ottawa, Canada, suffers from a number of physical ailments which leave her in constant pain, but when asked, "How are you feeling Betty?" she offers a big smile and says, "Oh, I have my good days and bad, but when I have my good days I feel terrific."

Catholics are called to live joyfully in the present moment because of the knowledge of God's love, the wonderful love that was revealed to us at Bethlehem. Merry Christmas!