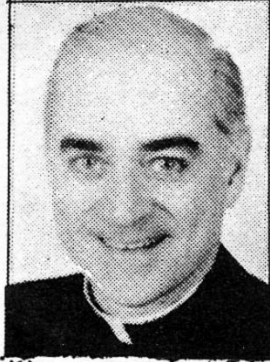


# Spiritual Agility

There are three ways to deal with adversity: 1) resent it, and go kicking and screaming into self-pity, 2) accept it with doleful resignation and a heavy heart; or 3) accept it in a spirit of cheerful acquiescence. A devout soul tries to be cheerful.



St. Francis de Sales called devout souls those who have the spiritual agility not only to be charitable, but to show forth a cheerful spirit in the process. He made the point that devout souls ascend to God on eagle's wings: "Ostriches never fly, hens fly, but clumsily and close to the ground, while eagles ... fly aloft, swiftly and frequently." I love his image of an eagle, gliding gracefully, high above the ground. If only we could be like the eagle.

The church teaches that charity is the queen of all virtues. Just as Jesus Christ entered the world to bring his healing and compassion, so a truly spiritual person enters the anguish of the world to do the same. Our charitable involvement's are rooted in the Incarnation. In Matthew 28, the Lord calls for action. "What you did for the least of My children, you did for Me." If charity is an active virtue cheerful acquiescence is its passive counterpart. A cheerful spirit soars to great heights. Obviously, achieving this lofty state of perfection is primarily a work of grace, but we have to do our part, too. Grace builds on nature.

We can make progress slowly by training our wills to remain focused on the "duty of delight." Two people might go through the same medical procedure for

cancer, but one ends up bitter and angry, while the other responds with cheerful acquiescence, trying not to be burden on others. Which one is really aspiring to be a saint? The cheerful one, of course.

How does one attain such a noble disposition? By willing it, and by refusing to give in to self-pity. Do not coddle yourself. Pray and pray again. Learn that the secret of sanctity and happiness is found in one's fidelity to the duty of the present moment. Avoid putting yourself down. Refuse to let the past drag you down and ruin your future.

St. Francis de Sales wrote this beautiful prayer about peace of mind:

"Do not fear what may happen tomorrow. The same loving Father who cares for you today, will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering or He will give you unflinching strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings."

God forgives and forgets, His healing is everlasting. God wants you not only to love Him but to have the fullness of happiness in the process. Enjoy your life now; live it joyfully because of the knowledge of God's unchanging love.

These words from the Hebrew Bible might be of comfort to you if you aspire to soar like an eagle. "Let the joy of the Lord be your strength" (Nehemiah 8:10) This means that you should try to live in God's joy, for then He will be your strength.

*[For a free copy of the Christopher News Note, Live Joyfully, send a stamped, self-addressed envelope to The Christophers, 12 E. 48th St., New York, N.Y. 10017.]*