

# God Really Loves You

By Father John Catoir-9/6/17

“God is love, and He wants to abide in you,”-1 John 4:16.

The storms of life are passing, but God’s love is unchanging. Stone Age people thought that the weather was God’s way of expressing his various moods. He was either resting or raging.

The Hebrew Prophets rejected this idea. They knew from revelation that God is Love. Zephaniah, back in 650 B.C., denounced the false gods of his day: the sun, the moon, and other inanimate objects.

These pagan gods inspired fear, but the Prophet Zephaniah adored the one, true God, as a God of Love: “God will exult over you with joy... on the day of festival, he will renew you by his love; He will dance for you with shouts of joy,”-Zephaniah, 3:17.

The Christian writers had an even better sense of God’s personality. St. John the Apostle wrote, “God so loved the world that He gave His only begotten Son, that those who believe in Him will have eternal life,”-John 3:16. That means the Lord wants you to leave behind everything that is counterproductive to your union with Him.

Pope Benedict XVI wrote, in his encyclical *God Is Love*, “I want my first encyclical to speak of the love that God lavishes upon each one of you...God wants to be as close to you as possible. He actually woos you.”

Apply these words to what you already know about the love Jesus has already demonstrated. He gave up His life for you. He suffered the fate of a common criminal. He allowed himself to be crucified so that your sins may be forgiven. And He said, “I’ve told you all these things

that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete,”-John 15:11. Jesus gives each one of us hope and joyful expectation.

Given this outpouring of love, is it any wonder that the Blessed Julian of Norwich, a woman who gave up her life to become a contemplative nun, had this splendid response? “The greatest honor anyone can give to Almighty God is to live joyfully because of the knowledge His love.”

Unlike most others, she not only recognized the debt we owe the Lord; she taught us how to repay it. She writes, “It’s not enough merely to give Him thanks, we must also demonstrate our unending gratitude by living our lives joyfully.”

Dorothy Day called it, “The duty of delight.” Never let anyone take your joy from you. Decide to stand ready to meet all challenges. Joy is in the will. The will says, “yes or no”.

One puts on the will to overcome sadness, self-pity and self-centeredness. One tries to maintain a joyful spirit in all circumstances. Brush off all those petty annoyances, bodily aches and irksome situations. Be the ‘new creation of joy’ that God wants you to be.

St. Catherine of Sienna said, “All the way to heaven is heaven.” Decide to bring your joy the world, by not giving in to moods of gloom and doom. Make a mantra of that beautiful Christmas hymn; keep saying, “Joy to the World”. And in the process, count on the help of Jesus.

May the Lord be your strength and your joy.