

Dementia and Spirituality

by Father John Catoir JCD - 2018

This interesting request came to me from one of my readers, “I would like to get another copy of your book **Enjoy the Lord** (Alba House, NY.) My mother has dementia and misplaced her copy...I remember her telling me how much she loved that book.”

I was happy to oblige. It's well known that many people who are cognitively impaired are intensely aware of God's presence. There is an inner faculty in each one of us called the soul. It functions in ways we do not fully understand.

I remember reading a story by Victor Frankl, the Psychoanalyst who survived the death camps of Auschwitz. In his book, “Man's Search for Meaning,” he tells of a young Jewish woman who was psychotic, in a world of her own, and yet was happy chanting Jewish Hymns.

Many people who are losing their grip on life, report that they find solace thinking about the love of God. My book must have brought comfort to this woman. It was not written in theological jargon or psychobabble.

Check out my web site: messengerofjoy.com, for daily, uplifting meditations on joy. On a separate website: JohnCatoir.com – you'll also find many articles and Videos dealing with spiritual joy.

Apart from the condition of senility, if you're at a point where you think you might need a shrink, remember that he or she will be asking: “what is it that you really want?” I also ask them, “What is it that God wants of you?” That leads to the quote from Jesus, “I have come that your joy may be full.”

Sometimes, the pursuit of what you want is the very thing that brought you to your present state. Whereas the acceptance of God's will, often bring peace and solace. “Our souls are restless until they rest in Thee O God,” -St. Augustine. That means our happiness is bound up with God and the knowledge of His love and mercy.

If you are suffering from emotional or mental illness, don't despair. We know a great deal more about chemical imbalance today than ever before. Psychiatrists use medical therapy more now because it's effectiveness is

often life-changing. Finding the right balance of medication can produce amazing results.

Prayer is also very helpful. In the Psalms we find a key concept in the word: trust. "I place my trust in Thee, O Lord, my life is in your hands."-Psalm 31:15. Have you ever heard of St. Dymphna? She is the patron Saint of those afflicted with nervous and mental disorders. Here's her story.

Dymphna was the only daughter of a pagan King named Damon, who ruled over the Oriel region of Ireland, back in the 7th century. When Dymphna was fourteen, her mother died, and afterward King Damon went slightly mad. He demanded that Dymphna replace his wife and marry him. Dymphna absolutely refused and ran away. The King quickly found her and attacked her. She fought him off. In a state of rage, he drew his sword and struck off her head. The story became legend.

Her feast day is May 15, and many healings have been reported over the years. According to tradition, many people with epilepsy, and mental illness who prayed to her were cured

Whether you rely on modern medicine, or the intercession of the saints, remain calm. Mental illness is not fatal. Many who were once deeply troubled are now healed and happy.

May the Lord be your strength and your joy.