

# Dementia and Spirituality

by Father John Catoir JCD- 1/30/18

This interesting request came to me from one of my readers, “I would like to get another copy of your book “Enjoy the Lord. 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. How so? 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 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 in thinking about the love of God. My book must have brought comfort to this woman because it was in plain English; not written in theological jargon or psychobabble.

Check out my web site: [messengerofjoy.com](http://messengerofjoy.com), for daily, uplifting meditations on joy, or my other website: [JohnCatoir.com](http://JohnCatoir.com) - for many articles and Videos dealing with spiritual joy.

If you’re at a point where you think you need a shrink, remember that he or she will be asking: “what is it that you really want?” I like to ask, “What is it that God wants of you?”

In some cases, the pursuit of what you want is the very thing that brought you to a state of discomfort. Our souls are restless until they rest in God, and our happiness is bound up with Him. Above all, believe in God’s forgiveness.

Prayer is helpful in this endeavor. Going back to the Psalms we find a key concept: “I place my trust in Thee O God. My life is in your hands.”-Psalm 31:15. Prayer and the proper medication can work wonders.

If you are suffering from emotional or mental difficulties, don't despair. We know a great deal more about chemical imbalance today than ever before. Medical therapy is now far advanced, and finding the right balance of medication can produce amazing results.

Have you ever heard of St. Dymphna, the patron Saint of those afflicted with nervous and mental disorders? She was the only daughter of a pagan King named Damon, who ruled over the Oriel region of Ireland, back in the 7<sup>th</sup> century.

When Dymphna was fourteen, her mother died, and afterward King Damon went slightly mad. He demanded that Dymphna marry him. She was terrified and absolutely refused. Soon she ran away, and was safe for a time. The King found her, they argued, and in a state of rage he drew his sword, and struck off his daughter's head.

According to tradition, many people with epilepsy, and mental illness who visited her tomb were cured. Her feast day is May 15, and many healings are still being reported.

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

May the Lord be your strength and your joy.