

# How Grace Changed My World

By Father John Catoir 2/19/16

Our planet needs hope and joy. It needs what you have to give. Each of us must try to find a way to help others find encouragement and inspiration in this darkened world. When these insights hit me; I concluded that one person can make a difference, and it changed everything.

In 1977, I received word that a Catholic multi-media organization, The Christophers, was searching for a new director. My heart leapt. I had admired their recently deceased founder, Father James Keller, ever since my father gave me his book, “You Can Change the World” on my 18<sup>th</sup> birthday.

The Christophers, a non-profit corporation, had two components: a radio & television production company, and a publishing house, which produced spiritual books and pamphlets. Communications was at the heart of their mission. Getting a job like that would be a dream come true. In college, I joined the Radio Station at Fordham, WFUV, hoping to prepare myself for a career in the media, but after I decided to be a priest all that changed. I put away those dreams and considered them to be a youthful fantasy.

After ordination I ended up working as a pastor, and running the Marriage Tribunal of the Diocese of Paterson. I had no experience running a media organization. Why even bother to apply? I also felt unworthy to be Father Keller’s successor. Doubts like that killed my enthusiasm.

Three weeks later a burst of energy hit me. I suddenly thought, “What have you got to lose?” I decided to write a letter to the Christopher Board of Directors applying for the position. This surprising shot of courage took over before I had a chance to question it. Looking back, I now see that God’s grace led me to act.

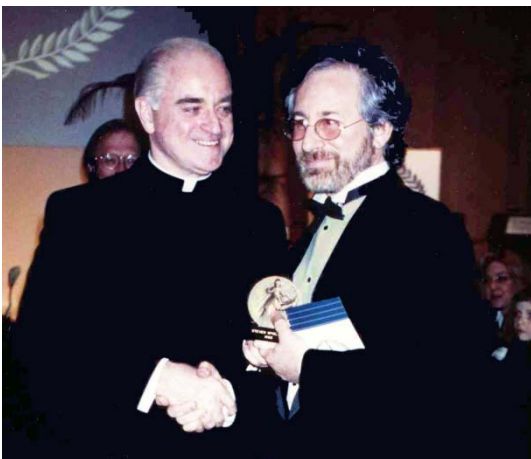
St. Thomas Aquinas defined actual grace as “a light to the mind or an impulse to the will.” Without taking our freedom away, God influences us to see something more clearly, or to take some action we had once been afraid to take. When I realized that the only thing holding me back from applying for the job was my fear of being rejected, I moved quickly. God’s grace spurred me on to follow this new surge of purpose and direction.

It is extremely important for everyone to see the connection between the graces we receive in life, and the hidden hand of God. Fear and insecurity can never be allowed to prevail over the noble desires of the human heart.

It took one year from the time I applied for the job, until the board actually chose me to be their new Director. I was both flabbergasted and jubilant. During my time as director, which lasted nearly 18 years, I devoted myself to recording radio-spots, which were played nationally,



Fr. Catoir on “The Christophers” TV Set



Fr. Catoir with Steven Spielberg

doing syndicated television interviews, writing books and articles, and running an office with 50 employees.

Bringing the Christopher message to millions was a profound joy in itself, but I added the theme of joy. Jesus said this in John 15, 11, ***“I have told you all these things that my joy may be in you, and your joy may be complete.”*** St. Francis de Sales embellished it in this way, “A sad saint is a sorry saint.”

Pope John Paul II confirmed it beautifully, “Christ came to bring joy; joy to children, joy to parents, joy to friends and families; indeed ‘joy’ is the key- note message of the Gospel. Go therefore and become messengers of joy,”