

Reflections

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Joy

The human being cannot exist forever without joy. “Whoever does not cultivate joy, spoils his/her character to the core of his/her being,” says Father Kentenich, Founder of the Schoenstatt Movement.

A human nature without joy is a sick nature. Saint Francis de Sales would say that “a saint who is sad is a sad saint.” The monks of the fourth century would say: “Whoever is sad is possessed by the devil;” therefore, the sad monks were punished severely.

Father Kentenich also said: “Whoever does not give joy to mankind, pushes mankind into the arms of the devil.”

Before canonizing someone, his/her heroic level of joyfulness is examined: Has he/she had a joyful nature? Has he/she been a joyful saint? If we want to be true masters of joy, we have to solve two tasks:

First task. We have to be aware of receiving everything good which God sends us as a gift: Out with the obvious things! Nothing is obvious in this world. Or is it perhaps obvious that we have enough bread to eat? Is it obvious that we would have our own home, or a good family? Is it obvious that we are Christians, that the Blessed Virgin has called us to that community, to that parish.....where we feel so good? In this way we should think about all the gifts which God grants us each day anew.

It is true that day is between two nights. The melancholic, while enjoying the joys of the day, is remembering yesterday’s troubles and is already suffering for those of tomorrow. We could also think the contrary..... that night is between two days. The goal should always be that we become masters of joy.

Second task. We should imagine the gifts from God as a call of love and give Him our response of love. Father Kentenich advises that we do it just like the chickens. What does the chicken do when it eats or drinks?

It lowers its head, raises its head, and lowers its head. We have to do the same: do each thing looking upward, lifting our heart toward God.

Models. I am certain that we all want to conquer this attitude of permanent joy. Models can help us with this.

The great master of joy is **Jesus Christ**. In His farewells, He says to his apostles: “I have said these things to you so that you can participate in my joy and that you may be completely happy.”

The other master of joy in the Gospels is **the Virgin Mary**. In the Magnificat, we find a declaration of her happiness and inner joy: “My heart praises the Lord; my soul is glad because of God my Savior.” She shows us how our joy should be: from within..... Joy and admiration for what God has done in us and through us.

Another master of authentic joy was **Father Kentenich**. We know that his life was one of continuous joy because he was intimately united to the source of joy which is God. He had many characteristics which help to cultivate joy: He was able to be amazed by and was able to be respectful and loving of things and especially of persons. He was able to enjoy the originality of each person. He was able to be a child with the children, foolish with the innocent, and wise with the wise. He enjoyed the smallest detail and the smallest things of daily life: he knew how to discover what was good, what was positive, and what was amusing. He also knew how to laugh heartily. In summary, he was a person who knew how to find the true flavor of life.

Questions for reflection

1. Do I transmit joy to others?
2. Do I laugh often?
3. Do I know verses which highlight the joy of Jesus?

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