

How To Be More Joyful

Headline: There certainly is no lack of worrisome news in our world these days. The regular drumbeat of downward trends, rising problems and unavoidable doom that seem to be constantly promoted is numbing. Shouldn't we individually and collectively be leading the effort to focus on the remarkable beauty, truth and joy that we have in our lives and the life in our community?

Objective: C.S. Lewis wrote, Joy is the Serious Business of Heaven. If Lewis's sage submission is in fact the case, what higher calling might we have than to heroically strive to bring Joy into our lives and the lives of our family, friends and community? Although we are profoundly aware that life has ups and downs we are called to be deeply spiritual, practice gratitude, serve with love, embrace community and live in hope, trusting in God's loving plan. Is this not the prescription for joy today that leads us to God's promise of eternal joy?

Song Suggestion: Joyful, Joyful, We Adore Thee or Now Thank We All Our God.

Bible and Catechism Readings:

Isaiah 55:12

For you shall go out in joy, and be led back in peace; the mountains and the hills before you shall burst into song, and all the trees of the field shall clap their hands.

James 1:2-4

My brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of any kind, consider it nothing but joy, because you know that the testing of your faith produces endurance; and let endurance have its full effect, so that you may be mature and complete, lacking in nothing.

Philippians 4:4-7

Rejoice in the Lord always; again I will say, Rejoice. Let your gentleness be known to everyone. The Lord is near. Do not worry about anything, but in everything by prayer and supplication with thanksgiving let your requests be made known to God. And the peace of God, which surpasses all understanding, will guard your hearts and your minds in Christ Jesus.

John 15:10-11

If you keep my commandments, you will abide in my love, just as I have kept my Father's commandments and abide in his love. I have said these things to you so that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be complete.

Catechism 1818

The virtue of hope responds to the aspiration to happiness which God has placed in the heart of every man; it takes up the hopes that inspire men's activities and purifies them so as to order them to the Kingdom of heaven; it keeps man from discouragement; it sustains him during times of abandonment; it opens up his heart in expectation of eternal beatitude. Buoyed up by hope, he is preserved from selfishness and led to the happiness that flows from charity.

Catechism 2500

The practice of goodness is accompanied by spontaneous spiritual joy and moral beauty. Likewise, truth carries with it the joy and splendor of spiritual beauty.

Saint: Teresa of Calcutta (Mother Teresa) (1910-1997)

Known for her tireless work among the poor and her joyful spirit despite challenging circumstances. She believed joy was a net by which souls could be caught, and her smile was a testament to her inner peace and happiness.

Vignette: John, sits and reflects, contemplating the weight of the past few years. The pandemic had brought unforeseen challenges, then his wife’s illness, financial strains from a job loss, and the emotional toll of supporting his children through remote learning. He struggled, but his faith remained his anchor, guiding him to seek light in the darkness. He is prayerful, choosing to find joy in the little things – the laughter of his children, the warmth of a shared meal, and the support of his parish community.

He never ceases to appreciate how the children laugh with him as they share stories or how his wife smiles beside him, holding his hand. as they contemplate the gift of their family. In that moment, John feels a profound sense of joy and gratitude. Despite the trials, there is beauty and love that perseveres. The challenges haven't disappeared, but he realizes that joy isn’t about the absence of hardship; it’s about finding God’s presence in every moment. For fathers, embracing joy means recognizing and cherishing faith filled moments, fostering resilience, and inspiring families to find hope and happiness, no matter what difficulties come..

Questions for Large and Small Group Discussion:

Can you share an example of a recent challenge you have endured or witnessed and how your faith helped you find joy or peace in that situation?

Are there specific practices or habits that either enhance or diminish our sense of joy as Catholic men? How can we incorporate more joyful actions into our routines?

Who are the shining examples of individuals in your life who lead legitimately joyful lives? Who does not have reason to be joyful, yet is?

Are there ways in which we can more consciously express gratitude in our families, workplaces, and communities? How does recognizing and celebrating blessings change our perspective on daily life?

Resources:

"Joy of the Just" Series on FORMED

"The Joy of the Gospel (Evangelii Gaudium)" by Pope Francis

Pope Francis's exhortation focuses on the joy of spreading the Gospel and living out the Christian faith. It emphasizes the importance of joy in the life of a believer. It offers practical advice on living out this joy in everyday actions.

Rediscover the Saints: Twenty-Five Questions That Will Change Your Life" by Matthew Kelly Explores the lives of various saints and inspires reflection and personal growth. It focuses on how the examples of the saints can lead us to a more joyful and purposeful life.

"Choosing Joy: The Secret to Living a Fully Christian Life" by Dan Lord Explores how Christians can choose joy, even in difficult circumstances, by focusing on God's love and providence. The book provides practical steps and spiritual insights to help cultivate joy.

Action Plan:

Take a serious inventory of how much time you spend absorbed with what is wrong in your world or how things could be better vs seriously considering the immense gifts we are given.

Think about a day or age when you might have been born as a way to appreciate all the blessing we have and reasons we should be living, and more importantly, sharing a joyful life.

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