

15. December 2024

Rejoice always in the Lord

Phil 4:4-7

Always be joyful, then, in the Lord; I repeat, be joyful. Let your good sense be obvious to everybody. The Lord is near. Never worry about anything; but tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude, and the peace of God which is beyond our understanding will guard your hearts and your thoughts in Christ Jesus.

Both today's first and second readings allude to joy. In the Message to Mother Eugenia Ravasio, our Heavenly Father speaks about true joy in these terms: "I created man for Myself and it is right that I should be ALL for him. Man will not enjoy true happiness except with his Father and Creator, because his heart is made for Me alone. For My part, My love for My creatures is so great that I have no greater joy than that of being among them".

We all know that joy is a great gift of God. It reflects our redeemed condition, and in eternity we will enjoy it forever. But even here, in our earthly life, spiritual joy can become the permanent state of our soul.

People who are joyful by nature and do not grieve easily, try to face all the circumstances of life with this joy. But there will be difficult situations that will cloud the natural joy they have. Spiritual joy, on the other hand, is capable of permeating all situations. It has a victorious character and in it the joy of heaven is already present, even if it is not yet consummated.

We know well that we cannot generate joy artificially. It is not a matter of our will. Nevertheless, the Apostle exhorts us to be always joyful. During the Season of Advent, the biblical texts lead us again and again to this joy: the joy that the Feast of the Birth of the Lord is approaching, so tender and so profound at the same time.

But how can we achieve a permanent inner joy? The Apostle gives us the guideline: it is joy in the Lord! He is the source of joy. The more we know Him, the more intimately we are united to Him, the more our joy will grow. Indeed, this source is inexhaustible. It is the same the other way round: the more we distance ourselves from God, the more we lack

true joy. We then try to make up for this lack with all kinds of earthly consolations, but these leave the soul empty and unsatisfied.

With his later exhortations, the Apostle Paul also shows us how we can keep this spiritual joy in us. Our good sense is to be known to all, the text tells us. Good deeds (i.e. works of mercy) nourish and preserve this joy. Giving and sharing are a language of love, and in this way we open our hearts so that joy can enter and remain in them much more easily than if we put ourselves at the centre of attention and want to take over everything.

Also the following sentence of St. Paul is a spiritual advice that helps to increase and preserve joy within us: *"Never worry about anything"*.

It is a "holy carelessness", which gives itself entirely to God with great trust. This attitude lightens the burden of everyday life with its worries. It abandons itself to God and experiences His Providence.

Often wrong thoughts and fears separate us from God and thus keep us from the source of joy. Here, too, the Apostle offers us advice: *"Tell God all your desires of every kind in prayer and petition shot through with gratitude"*. Here we can include our bad moods, gloomy thoughts and disordered sorrows, which we are also to present to God in prayer. It is necessary to be vigilant, so that we do not allow ourselves to be carried away by such thoughts, which will eventually tarnish our joy. Then we can watch over the joy that has been given to us as a gift from God and a fruit of the Holy Spirit (see meditation on joy as a fruit of the Holy Spirit: <https://www.youtube.com/watch?v=IR9zZbFh5Mo>).

God also rejoices and rejoices in us, especially when we walk in His ways. Thus, a relationship with God arises in which the joy is mutual: God is pleased with us; and He is our joy. What a radiant perspective! This is as it should be, and we hope that all men will find this source.

Let nothing and no one deprive us of the joy of the Feast of the Birth of the Lord, not even the tribulations we are experiencing. These are transitory, and if men will accept God's invitation to conversion, the shadows that currently hang over mankind will also have to give way.

May the Lord, in His grace, intervene and send His messengers to show us the way that leads to Him! May there be signs like the apparition of Our Lady of Guadalupe, after which so many people were converted to Christ! May peace and true joy enter the hearts of men!