

Live Joyfully



Christopher News Notes

“The greatest honor you can give to Almighty God is to live gladly, joyfully because of the knowledge of His love.”—Blessed Julian of Norwich

A JOYFUL LIFE BEGINS WITH A DEEP APPRECIATION OF GOD’S LOVE. Christ’s supreme revelation of God’s love is expressed visibly in His own self-offering on the cross. This is the basis of our happiness and hope. But two other things are needed as well: a noble purpose in life and a spirit of fidelity to the duties of the present moment.

As Dorothy Day once wrote, “How necessary it is to cultivate a spirit of joy. It is a psychological truth that the physical acts of reverence and devotion make one feel devout. The courteous gesture increases one’s respect for others. To act lovingly is to begin to feel loving, and certainly to act joyfully brings joy to others which in turn makes one feel joyful. I believe we are called to the duty of delight.”

Find Your Purpose in Life

“Most people want more. When that is not enough, they want better, and when better is not enough, they want different. When different is not enough, they become sad. What they really need is purpose,” said TV news anchor Ernie Anastos on *Christopher Closeup*. “I’ll never forget what my grammar school teacher Mrs. Ryan said when I asked her, ‘How do you find your purpose?’ She answered, ‘Whatever you enjoy doing will be the secret of your success and your happiness.’ And she was right.”

Joy is the by-product of a meaningful life. Consequently, the wise person tries to find a career that he or she will find meaningful and fulfilling. Doing what you do best and looking for ways to serve others opens the gateway to joy and self-respect. Countless numbers of Christophers over the years have changed their careers in order to find a position where they might be of greater service.

- “If you’re not interested in helping others, you’re in trouble,” was the opinion of a 38-year-old teacher from Tennessee who left his well-paying job in the business world to become an educator. “I wanted to make a contribution. For me, being a teacher is my way of contributing to a better society.”
- At age 27, Jan Miller was supervising 20 employees at a Midwestern consulting firm. In spite of her success, she felt unfulfilled. She said, “People think that if they aren’t in management, they haven’t arrived. They fall into the trap of ladder climbing.” So she changed jobs and began serving clients one-on-one as a business counselor in the same company. The move gave her new joy

and a sense of accomplishment. Ten years later, Jan knew she had made the right decision. For her, personal fulfillment came through helping others.

Five Steps to Fully Live Each Day

The next step to joy is living in the present moment. As Jean Pierre de Caussade, S.J., said in *Abandonment to Divine Providence*, “The secret of sanctity and happiness consists in but one thing, fidelity to God’s will as it is manifested in the duties of the present moment.”

1. Don’t let the past drag you down. Feelings of guilt can weigh you down, and so can burning resentment over past hurts. But you must not give in to negative thinking. What’s done is done. Once you repent, God forgives and forgets. Discipline yourself to trust in God’s mercy. And remember, you’ll be in a better position to forgive those who offend you, if you are more forgiving of yourself.

Free yourself of resentment, spite, and hatred by praying for the grace to forgive, even when you don’t feel like forgiving. True forgiveness is in the will. The very fact that you sincerely want to forgive means you have actually forgiven the person in your heart. Good feelings will follow, though not necessarily right away.

“Forgive, and you will be forgiven; give, and it will be given to you. A good measure, pressed down, shaken together, running over, will be put into your lap; for the measure you give will be the measure you get back.”
—Luke 6:37-38

2. Don’t be afraid of the future. Living in the present moment means saying “NO” to dark and fearful thoughts about the future. Before you go to sleep at night, say the prayer of St. Francis de Sales. He wrote it to help himself deal with his own persistent fears:

“Do not fear what may happen tomorrow. The same loving Father Who cares for you today will care for you tomorrow and every day. Either He will shield you from suffering, or He will give you unfailing strength to bear it. Be at peace then, and put aside all anxious thoughts and imaginings.”

Good Thoughts About Good Cheer

- *“The cheerful person will do more in the same time, will do it better, will persevere in it longer, than the sad or sullen person.”*
—Thomas Carlyle
- *“I come to You, Jesus, to take Your touch before I begin my day. Let Your eyes rest upon my eyes for a while. Let me take to my work the assurance of Your friendship. Fill my mind to the last, through the desert of noise. Let Your blessed sunshine fill my thoughts and give me strength for those who need me.”*
—Mother Teresa
- *“Cheerfulness keeps up a daylight in the mind.”*
—Joseph Addison
- *“While I was still in my native country, the Philippines, I learned this song: ‘The life of a Christian is a happy one, a happy one, a truly happy one.’ Wherever I am, I love to sing this song, especially after praying and elevating all my aches and pains and trials and tribulations of daily living. My secret is that I go on with my daily activities with a song in my heart.”*
—Letitia G. Caceres

Why spoil the present moment with anxiety? Today is all you’ve got. The past is over, and the future is mere fantasy. Ninety percent of the things we worry about never occur anyway. Granted we all have to plan for the future, but we can learn to do that without needless anxiety.

“Whatever is true, whatever is honorable, whatever is just, whatever is pure, whatever is pleasing, whatever is commendable, if there is any excellence and if there is anything worthy of praise, think about these things...and the God of peace will be with you.”
—Philippians 4:8,9

3. Be a doer, not a worrier. Worry never baked a cake, built a bridge, or solved a problem. Fretting does little more than make a bad situation worse. If you do your best, and try to find your fulfillment in making this a better world, there is little danger

that you will be overcome by fear of failure. Thomas Edison tried 2,000 experiments in search of a filament for the light bulb. When none worked to his satisfaction, his assistant complained, "All our work is in vain. We've gotten nowhere!"

"On the contrary," Edison replied, "we've come a long way and we've learned a lot. We now know that there are 2,000 materials which will not make a good light bulb."

The assistant was a worrier, prone to discouragement, while Edison was a doer, undaunted by setbacks. He kept his cool and plowed ahead with confidence in all he did. In matters great and small, it's always better to light one candle than to curse the darkness.

"Do not worry about your life...Can any of you by worrying add a single hour to your span of life?... So do not worry about tomorrow."

—Matthew 6:25,27,34

4. Be as cheerful as you can be in all circumstances. Everyone must endure unavoidable miseries, such as illness. In those cases, we must do everything possible to get well, to accept the treatment and recovery period with courage. Tears will come at certain times; after all, we are human. But our goal is to live gladly because of the knowledge of God's love.

Cheerful acquiescence is not a matter of ignoring problems that demand positive action, such as abuse, addiction, or financial crises. Rather, it means working through these difficulties and trust-

ing in God's care and protection all along the way. Consider Jesus' words from Matthew 6:16-18: "Whenever you fast, do not look dismal, like the hypocrites, for they disfigure their faces so as to show others that they are fasting. Truly I tell you, they have received their reward. But when you fast, put oil on your head and wash your face, so that your fasting may be seen not by others but by your Father who is in secret; and your Father who sees in secret will reward you."

As a man of faith and courage, Omar Ibargoyen of Montevideo, Uruguay, had no fear of death. Yet he battled for life in his last few months as the cancer spread from his intestines to his liver and lungs. In the end, he died peacefully, leaving this message with his family: "Let us abandon ourselves in the arms of God, knowing that His plan for each one of us is perfect...the best...although at the moment we may not understand it. This acceptance has given me the peace and strength necessary to face each day and deepen my faith and gratitude for life...that continues forever. Whatever happens, I know everything will be all right."

"He gives power to the faint, and strengthens the powerless."
—Isaiah 40:29

5. Reject all forms of self-pity. This is not to say that there are no painful situations, and that persons caught in them are not to be pitied. Rather, it is simply understanding that self-pity is self-defeating. Giving in to self-pity weakens your spirit and causes you needless grief. Betty Maione of Ottawa, Canada, has a number of physical ailments which cause her to be in constant pain. Instead of lamenting her fate, she has the graceful knack of deflecting pity. When people ask how she is feeling, Betty responds with a big smile, "I have my good days and my bad days. But when I have my good days, I feel terrific."

"Rejoice always; pray without ceasing, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you."
—1 Thessalonians 5:16-18


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