



## COME, HOLY SPIRIT, AND GIVE US JOY

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Have you ever known someone that when you looked at them, really looked, you could see something different about them? Perhaps it was in the way they smiled, laughed, or interacted with others. Maybe it was the way their eyes shone with a sincerity that perhaps took your breath away. You'd say they were happy but the word "happy" just couldn't seem to accurately describe the person. You knew they faced hardships and difficulties and yet they rarely lingered on those things but they seemed to have an ability to keep the smile on their face and a song in their heart. What was different about this person? The answer: joy. Isn't joy just another word for happiness? What is the difference between the two?

Happiness is defined as, "the quality or state of being happy" and "good fortune; contentment; pleasure; or joy".

Joy is defined as, "the emotion of great delight or happiness caused by something exceptionally good or satisfying; keen pleasure; elation".

While each definition contains the other word they are not interchangeable. In addition to this we also need to remember that what we are focusing on is a joy that comes from the Holy Spirit... *a spiritual joy*. The joys of the world are vastly

different from the joy that we receive from the Holy Spirit. Let's take a closer look.

I know many "happy" people. They smile and laugh and make others smile and laugh too. Unfortunately their happiness is often fleeting. Their happiness comes all too often from "things"... whether their job is going good, if they were able to buy the latest gadget on the market, if their children got good grades, if it was a sunny day when they hoped to do something fun, and the list goes on and on. Still, these same happy people can be dramatically different if their situation changes. Their happiness is dependent on what is happening around them. Things need to happen in the way they are expecting it to or want it to, otherwise they have a hard time finding reasons to be happy. Happiness, it seems, is very fleeting.

Spiritually joyful people though are different. Their joy isn't dependent on their situation. They may have amazing things happening in their lives or they may be facing such difficulties that we wonder how in the world they could ever hold a smile on their face, but their joy is apparent. This isn't to say that joyful people never feel down, they can and do. It's not to say that joyful people never encounter problems... on the contrary! They experience more tribulation, more adversity, and more distress than most people. The difference is that joyful people embrace their hardships and trials knowing that these situations are there to bring them closer to Christ. They are encouraged to embrace the cross they have been given and continue on their journey toward Jesus. As St. Ignatius of Loyola tells us, **"Here is the difference between the joys of the world and the cross of Jesus Christ: after having tasted the first, one is disgusted with them; and on the contrary, the more one partakes of the cross, the greater the thirst for it."**

A spiritually joyful person can see that the cross they are being asked to carry helps them become more like Christ. They gladly accept the cross because they know that they are called to be like Christ and if this helps them in the journey then it is a great honor to carry the cross. They are happy to do it because of the reward it brings. In James we read, **"Consider it all joy, my brothers, when you encounter various trials, for you know that the testing of your faith produces perseverance."** *James 1:2-3* A JOY to encounter trials?! This goes against our worldly view of joy and happiness doesn't it?

When we ask the Holy Spirit for a life of JOY what we are truly asking is that He brings us the ability to endure hardships and trials with a heart that knows God is right there with us, never abandoning us, and always holding us close. We are asking, not for an easy life, but a life where regardless of what we encounter we accept it with an open heart and a belief that no matter if what we are encountering is suffering or happiness it will bring us closer to Christ.

Spiritually joyful people also possess other gifts and traits:

- They put God first in their lives. They realize that “things” the world tells them they need to be happy are not what truly brings contentment. They find that happiness in following God. They regularly say, “Thy will be done!”
- They are patient, not only with God but with themselves and others.
- They make forgiveness a priority. They not only forgive others but they forgive themselves.
- They don’t focus on what is going wrong in their world but try to see the good in every situation.
- They pray. They relinquish their troubles to Christ.
- They are thankful. They are thankful not only for the good but for the times where they are asked to pick up their cross.
- They put others before themselves. They know that to serve with an open and giving heart is part of finding joy. They know that when they serve others they are serving God.

Cardinal Dolan tells us that, “**Joy is the infallible sign of the presence of God within.**” When a person has true spiritual joy one can’t help but see God in their eyes and soul. They simply can’t hide that God resides within them. When we are truly joyful our soul magnifies the Lord. When our soul magnifies the Lord others can’t help but take notice and want what we have. As Mother Teresa says, “**Joy is a net of love by which we catch souls.**” When we have true spiritual joy we help bring others closer to God as well. What a tremendous gift!

Joy requires us to die to ourselves and live completely for God. It requires us to say yes to God in all aspects of our life. It is a complete giving of ourselves to God. The moment we say, “Thy will be done” we begin to live for the Lord. We begin to experience a joy that nothing else in this life can compare to. While we know we will experience pain and adversity we also know that those hardships will only bring us closer to God’s love, grace, and peace.

**Are you ready to live a joyful life?**