

# How to remain ever joyous!



*Choose Christ, Choose Life  
For Christ Chooses You.*

*Rejoice always. Pray constantly. Give Thanks in all circumstance.  
(1 Thessalonians 5:16-18)*

*Man cannot live without joy; therefore when he is deprived of true  
spiritual joys it is necessary that he becomes addicted to carnal  
pleasure.*

**St. Thomas Aquinas**

What makes a person happy? The answers to this question may vary according to each person. Several matter-of-fact responses would be money, pleasure, power, position, fame or even the contemplation of truth! The last one belongs to the philosopher Aristotle (384-322 BC). For St. Thomas Aquinas, however, perfect happiness can be found *not* in any state of mind, but consists solely in the contemplation of God as seen in His essence.

Where can we find God in His essence and how can we see and contemplate Him in this life? Intuitively one may sense that the whole question of happiness and its fulfillment revolves around what we mean by contemplation.

### *WHAT IS CONTEMPLATION?*

According to Jordan Aumann: “A type of knowledge that begins and ends in love; it is more experiential and intuitive than theoretical and discursive. Psychologically, it is very similar to the esthetic experience that results from one's awareness and appreciation of the beautiful.” St. Thomas Aquinas describes it as *a loving gaze* and St. John of the Cross speaks of it as *the loving awareness of God*.

### *A LOVING GAZE*

Contemplation begins and ends in love. It is “*a loving gaze*” or “*the loving awareness of God*.” But where do we begin and end our contemplation? How to be aware of God and gaze lovingly at Him?

St. Paul has a simple answer for us. Instead of focusing our mind and the gaze of our soul on the celestial beings and essences, he shows us how to be practically ever joyous. In his exhortation to the Thessalonians, Paul says:

*See that none of you repays evil for evil, but always seek to do good to one another and to all. Rejoice always, pray constantly, give thanks in all circumstances; for this is the will of God in Christ Jesus for you (1 Thes 5:16-18).*

Seeing Christ in the other person is where we can begin and end our contemplation. Gazing lovingly and being aware of Christ in our neighbor should be the beginning.

### *FIX YOUR EYES ON CHRIST*

In his *Commentary on St. Paul's Epistle to the Thessalonians*, St. Thomas Aquinas clarifies the meaning. He shows why we should “*not repay evil for evil, always do good to one another and to all, to rejoice always, to pray constantly and to give thanks in all circumstances.*”

- *Why should we not repay evil for evil?* Because that reveals how we should behave toward each other as God does; and how to conduct ourselves with God's gifts. Simply, we should not be mean to others for kindness makes us joyous always.
- *Why should we always seek to do good?* Doing good brings us peace (Ps. 34:11); it overcomes evil (Roman 12:21); and it reveals who we are. (Gal 6:10). In a word, doing good and being kind to all will make us ever joyous.
- *Why rejoice always?* It shows us how to behave toward God. Believe that everything He does is for our own good, even when evil occurs to us. In the end God Himself is the Good that we receive as our final reward.
- *Why pray?* (1 Thes 5:17). It sets us free and makes us happy. It gives us joy. *How should we pray?* *Constantly*, for then God will bring us into His presence and permit us to eat with Him at His table always (2 Sam 9:7). That means being in the divine presence constantly. *Why constantly?* Because in praying with a meek and humble attitude, God will fulfill all our good desires (Ps 10:17). To pray constantly also means to give alms: “*For the person who receives alms prays for you even when you are asleep.*”

- *Why offer thanks in all circumstances?* (1 Thes 5:18). For it makes us human. A thankless being is not human. So we thank God for all the blessings we have already received, for all the good and the bad times we have experienced and for the confidence that God loves us and wants the best for us: “*We know that in everything God works for the good of those who love Him.*” (Romans 8:28).

Being thankful shows the way to truth and the knowledge to salvation. It makes human. In a word, we become Eucharistic.

### *THE KINGDOM IS JOY*

Joy is the sign and reality of the Kingdom of Heaven. Joy is the witness that Christ, the Risen Lord, is with us and in us. It is His will that all be saved and share in His joy (1 Tim 2:4).

*What makes a person truly happy?* **Jesus Himself.**

Only in Jesus can we see God in His true identity. To be aware of His presence in our neighbor is the beginning of our contemplation.

To embrace lovingly all circumstances, whether good or ill as His blessing enhances our gaze of confidence in His goodness.

Confident in Christ who does everything for our own good, we give praise and thanksgiving at all time. For to remain with Jesus is to be ever joyous.

*Fr. Michael J. Truong Luân, C.Ss.R.*



*Mary, Cause of our Joy: Pray for us!*