

Waiting Well

Celebrate While You Wait

Even when we have a great destination or a fantastic goal, unless we learn how to find joy and choose to rejoice while we wait and while we prepare, we will miss out on life. This does not mean that we have to wait until we “feel” happy enough to rejoice or until we don’t have anything left to do; it means that we have made the decision to rejoice. One of our problems is that we are often not fully “present” when we have the opportunity to celebrate; we want to be somewhere else, doing something else, with someone else. This division of our attention or of our heart can make it virtually impossible to choose to rejoice. Nonetheless, when we choose to remember that we have reasons to rejoice and choose to stop being so preoccupied with ourselves, we make room to rejoice. Ultimately, we don’t have to rejoice in a “job well done” or in a “successful life”, but the fact that God, the source of everything who knows us and loves us personally, is the reason for our joy. When we celebrate Him, we are “waiting well”.

Discussion Questions

1. Are you good at celebrating? Describe a time when you were able to really celebrate without being distracted by the idea that you needed to be somewhere else; a time when you were able to “stop” and rejoice where you were.
2. Do you ever feel like you are not able to stop? If you even slowed down, you would lose your place or lose at life? In your best and most clear moments, do you know this to be true? Or does it merely come from your imagination? Does it come from outside you? Possibly from someone in your past who looked down on rest? Or maybe it’s coming from a boss or a deadline.
3. To rejoice is not the same thing as “cutting loose”. Too many people get wound up into a ball of stress so that when they finally “celebrate” they lose themselves. A person can celebrate with many people or with just a few. A person can rejoice in a quiet and relaxed way as well as loudly and excitedly. What do you prefer? Which do you normally choose?
4. Many people wrestle with issues related to depression or anxiety. This makes it more difficult to “simply choose” to rejoice or even to smile. Others face real external difficulties. Why do you think it is still worth trying to choose to rejoice if this is your situation? Even if you feel like you aren’t able to have joy like other people seem to be able to, is it worth making some effort? Why or why not?
5. Do you ever find yourself feeling like you haven’t “measured up” to God’s gift of life? In those moments, it is easy to fall into the trap of thinking that you have nothing to celebrate because you are a “disappointment to God”. Knowing that God has called you to simply let Him love you, how would you encourage someone else to rejoice in God (and focus less on themselves)?

God in Real Life

- I. While many cultures celebrate well, Catholic Christians have the absolute best reason to find joy in life. We take Saint Paul's command seriously, to "Test everything and retain what is good". Further, we belong to a God who loves us and is always present to us in every situation. We take joy in HIM, not in ourselves. This week, you are invited to be like the Bride who takes joy on her wedding day, not in how beautiful she is, but in the One who loves her. Especially practice the skill of being able to rejoice in God when life is difficult this week.

Be Transformed

The Bible talks about, demonstrates, and enjoins us to celebrate in God's presence:

- A. King David famously rejoiced while the Ark of the Covenant was brought into Jerusalem. This King and warrior was so exuberant that his wife felt ashamed of him (think Uncle Ralph). See 2 Samuel 6:14ff.
- B. The Books of Maccabees talk about the long-fought fight to regain the Temple from the Greeks. Once the Jews succeeded, they held an eight-day long feast called the Festival of Lights (or Hanukkah). See 1 Maccabees 4.
- C. Saint Thomas Aquinas said that "Joy is found when one possesses what one loves." Those who belong to Christ also "posses" Him in a real and powerful way. The degree to which we experience joy in possessing Jesus is in direct relation to how much we love Him.
- D. Ecclesiastes Chapter Three makes it clear that there is a time to rejoice or laugh or sing. But there is also a time to mourn and weep and refrain from those things. Read and reflect on this.
- E. The prophet Habakkuk says profound words about having nothing, yet rejoicing in God. See Habakkuk 3:17-19

To the Heart

The prophet Nehemiah encouraged the People of God while they were in a time of great difficulty with these words:

Today is holy to the Lord your God. Do not be sad, and do not weep; for today is holy to the our Lord. Do not be saddened this day, for rejoicing in the Lord must be your strength!
(Nehemiah 8:9-10)