



An Invitation To The Happy Life



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A Unique Birthday Party

When St. Augustine turned 30 years old, he threw a very peculiar party to celebrate his birthday. He had invited his friends for the three days of continuous celebration. His mother was also in attendance, and at that time, he hadn't yet repented from his previous life and returned to the Church. What had preoccupied him during this party was not the fact that he had reached the age of complete manhood; rather, he was concerned with the meaning of happiness. He proposed a question for discussion: "What is a happy life?" St. Augustine argued that deep inside every person there is a yearning for happiness. The group realized that happiness remained elusive, intangible, and sometimes unrecognizable.

He started by proposing that happiness is to have everything that one desires; he then offered that even if one has everything that one desires, he would still fear tomorrow - when one might lose everything he possesses. Ironically, one loses happiness before he loses his possessions - out of fear and worry over tomorrow. Therefore, St. Augustine concluded, one cannot live happily "ever after," even after amassing riches and possessions!

St. Augustine continued: "The only One we can possess, without being afraid of losing, is the Lord Himself. He is not merely the Source of happiness, rather He is Happiness itself. We can behold Him eternally,

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and happiness would be attached to us and live inside us forever.”

St. Augustine published this interesting discussion later in his life, and this publication was considered one of his distinguished endeavors that touched the lives of many!



A Happiness That Challenges The Valley of Tears

When a child is born, he screams and cries - announcing his entry to the world of weariness, “the valley of tears” (Psalm 84:6). However, a true believer who finds joy in God can endure pain, tears, and even death. The following are some examples of this inner joy.

1. The apostle Paul was caught up to the third heaven when he was being stoned. There, he saw and heard things that no human language was able to describe (Epistle to 2 Corinthians 12:2-4).
2. When in prison, St. Paul did not worry about the chains placed on him, or about the prison walls, or about being deprived from his ministry. Instead, he was so filled with heavenly joy that he sent an epistle to the Philippians asking them to share in this heavenly happiness with him: “Rejoice in the Lord always, again I will say, Rejoice!” (Epistle to Philippians 4:4).
3. In the lions’ den, Daniel had spent a sensational night, when he enjoyed heaven. He was met with an angel of God that was sent to comfort and strengthen him. He chanted and sang praises with him to shut the lions’ mouths, and to transform their savage nature (Daniel 6:22). St. Aphrahat even said, “The lions in the den were praying with him.”



4. In the fiery furnace, the three saints enjoyed the Word of God, Who walked with them in the furnace (Daniel 3:25), for the nature of the flames was changed to liken the morning dew.
5. During his exile on the island of Patmos, St. John was deprived from moving about the earth from one nation to another. There, he was caught up on the Lord's Day to enjoy the heavens and to document the most amazing scenes in the Book of Revelation.
6. While the deacon St. Stephen was being stoned, all that occupied him was the salvation and the happy afterlife of those who were stoning him. He lifted up his eyes to heaven and saw Jesus Christ Himself, as if promising him that He will grant his wish. St. Stephen cried out: "Lord, do not charge them with this sin" (Acts 7:60).

In the midst of trouble, the true believer challenges the circumstances around him and praises with the apostle: "He made us sit together in heavenly places in Christ Jesus" (Epistle to Ephesians 2:6). The entire world was not able to isolate him from his heavenly family. "Now, therefore, you are no longer strangers and foreigners, but fellow citizens with the saints and members of the household of God" (Epistle to Ephesians 2:19).



How Could I Be Happy, While I Am Struggling with Sin?

If a little child tells his friend that he was going to travel to a busy city the next day, his friend would likely advise him not to go. The city streets are wide and filled with nonstop traffic. He would be jeopardizing his life for he may be involved in an accident. The friend says that he will rather stay in his home town for the rest of his life to guarantee his safety. Will that little child be happy? Will he have inner peace by staying in his home town for the rest of his life?

That decision to stay safely in the same place will not give him true happiness; however, if the child went to the busy city – walking hand-in-hand with his father, he will be safe and will also acquire new experiences.

When we face temptations or enter a war with the enemy, we do not lose our inner peace and happiness as long as we depend on the Lord's embrace; as long as we enjoy the power of the blood of the cross; and as long as we dwell under the leadership of the Holy Spirit. The moments in which we are fighting sin and temptation, are the most wonderful moments of our lives; for it is at these times that we experience our happiness in God, Who grants us victory. Thus, we grow in happiness in the Redeemer, and proceed from one glory to another.

We wonder: Did Jacob lose his happiness when he was wrestling with God until the break of day (Genesis



32:24)? No way! It was the happiest night of his entire life, for he enjoyed God's blessings. Thus, we can spend our lives as a wonderful night wrestling with God in love and crying, "We will not let You go until You bless us!" And as the day breaks into the glorious Day of the Lord, we will find joy in sharing His glory!

Our fight to grow in God, and to destroy the forces of Satan, continuously adds true happiness to our lives. We do not fear sin - even if we fall into weakness - as long as we dwell in the embraces of our Lord, Who lifts us up.



A Dynamic and Constantly Renewable Happiness

Happiness is a divine gift that is always renewing and growing - for it is a dynamic gift, not a static one. The following points are a few of the secrets of its continuous growth.

1. **God is always working for man's happiness:** Even after we reach the eternal life, "My Father has been working until now, and I have been working" (John 5:17); "...Because His compassions fail not. They are new every morning" (Lamentations 3:22-23).
2. **The feature of renewal is eternal for us:** "Behold, all things are become new" (Epistle to 2 Corinthians 5:17; Revelation 21:5); "They go from strength to strength, every one of them in Zion appears before God" (Psalms 84:7); "But we all, with unveiled face, beholding as in a mirror the glory of the Lord, are being transformed into the same image from glory to glory, just as by the Spirit of the Lord" (Epistle to 2 Corinthians 3:18).
3. **Dynamics is a feature of true happiness:** When man suffers from stagnancy, he loses his happiness. The apostle referred to this when he said: "...this one thing I do, forgetting those things which are behind and reaching forward to those things which are ahead" (Epistle to Philippians 3:13).



A HAPPY PERSON IS A SOURCE OF HAPPINESS TO OTHERS

Since God is Happiness itself, then a truly happy person would hold God within him; he would emanate happiness to everyone he meets. He desires eternal happiness for all mankind in the Lord. He dedicates his energy, worship, and emotions to the happiness of others. Just like his Savior, he finds his happiness when he suffers to find comfort; when he gets poor so that others could become richer; when he is ashamed so that others could be glorified.



The Offering of Joy and Happiness

While imprisoned, the apostle Paul wrote an epistle to the Philippians declaring, “I am being poured out as a drink offering on the sacrifice and service of your faith” (Epistle to Philippians 2:17). Just before his martyrdom, he also wrote, “I am already poured out as a drink offering and the time of my departure is at hand” (Epistle to 2 Timothy 4:6).

Even though the apostle was imprisoned he did not complain about his circumstances, for he knew he was suffering on behalf of the souls of the believers. Oh how wondrous the apostle considers himself the source of joy for his suffering people. He truly shares the same feature with his suffering Master. Through Him, he pours spiritual joy onto his people even if his hands are chained and his body jailed, whilst deprived from meeting with them face to face.

Our suffering Lord Jesus Christ, Who dwells inside us, is not just the Source of our happiness and joy, but also is the key to our transformation into a source of joy and happiness for many. He is the Joy poured inside the offering, which is related to the cross. Unfortunately, many peoples’ understanding of their mission to pour out joy onto others is merely through superficial human courtesies, through an outward smile, and humor! Our Lord Jesus Christ has poured His joy within us through



the blood of His cross, and His true practical love. Thus, we can only pour joy onto others through His Spirit and through our daily cross.

THE OFFERING AND AN ASCENDING PRAYER

What was this offering of which the apostle was so proud of until the end of his life? According to Jewish rituals, the priest used to pour wine inside the slain sacrifice after it was washed to offer it to God as a sign of reconciliation and love between God and man (Numbers 15:5). This pouring of wine is a symbol of the spiritual joy which we receive while we are in the midst of our suffering.

As the priest pours the offer inside the sacrifice, the wine seeps under the offering and begins to fume. This fume ascends towards heaven and is a symbol of the prayer of the Cross offering. Thus, as the apostle Paul is offered as a sacrifice before the divine throne for the sake of the faith of his people, and for their fellowship in Jesus Christ, the divine Sacrifice. Thus, the Apostle Paul's sacrifice would turn into an incense prayer, a sweet savor unto God, an offering made by fire unto the Lord (Exodus 29:40-41).



Pouring of One's Self

The Apostle Paul considers his life in the Lord as an offering that declares the presence of God amongst His people. His life seeks to make the earth a holy place for God through the Cornerstone, our Lord Jesus Christ. That was the true Source of his success, to see the earth transformed into heaven, and mankind united together in the Lord.

Briefly, the following were the aims of the apostle Paul, the joyful offering:

1. to share in the feature of our Lord, Jesus Christ the Offering, as a Source of joy to all believers
2. to see the Church transforming into a pillar of smoke that carries a sweet savor, an offering made by fire unto the Lord
3. to see mankind turn away from the dust, that it was drawn to, through the first Adam; and instead look toward heaven which it inherited through the second heavenly Adam

IS THERE ANYONE HAPPIER THAN A TRUE CHRISTIAN?

That is exactly what St. Ambrose experienced: He felt that he was the happiest person on the face of the earth when he was in communion with God, as he has mentioned in one of his letters. God created man in His own image; thus, man cannot reach true happiness



unless he regains this image through the work of God. Our loving and accepting God opens up His arms before the believer and grants him affiliation with Him through the work of the wondrous salvation presented by the incarnate Word of God. This joyful relationship begins at the spiritual birth granted to him by the Holy Spirit; and is continuously renewed by the Holy Spirit, and through repentance, lest he might carry the perfect icon of Christ Himself!



Through Your Love I Am Ready To Be Offered

- ™ My Lord, I see You on the cross,
as a love Sacrifice for the entire world,
and as a holy Wine that is poured into the soul,
granting eternal joy.
- ™ Accept me in this wounded body of love,
so I would pour myself, a wine of love, into the
wounded hearts,
so I would be happy for their happiness in You, and
rejoice in their peace in You.
- ™ Accept my life as a true offering of happiness,
so I would witness for You in the valley of tears,
so that others would turn to You,
their thoughts would be lifted up to You,
and their lives would turn into an eternal rejoicing
prayer, and their lives would ascend to heaven as a
sweet aroma unto You.
- ™ Oh, accept my life as an offering unto You,
and change my name from Jacob to the new Israel,
so I would truly become a prince, a child of the King
of kings;
and would carry Your strength as my own.
And praise with the Prophet Isaiah:
“the Lord is my strength and my song!”
I would reveal Your grace to many souls;
so that the earth of their hearts would turn to heaven,
and their souls, along with their bodies,
would become Your temple.



Some Practical Steps to Enjoy Happiness

- ™ Dedicate your life to make others happy; just as Christ, the Lord, desires to make us happy, as He has sanctified Himself for us so that we can carry Him inside us to be the Source of our happiness. Also, not caring for the happiness of others makes us lose our right to happiness in the Lord.
- ™ When you carry our Lord Jesus Christ inside you, you can dare to overcome your human weaknesses, the circumstances around you, and all the tricks of the devil. You can always rely on Him, Who is always ready to come forth to conquer through you and your brethren.
- ™ Always behold a thankful and arrow-like prayer, and point it at the complaining devil; repeating the words “Oh Lord Jesus Christ, have mercy upon me, a sinner.” This is called the Jesus prayer, or the short prayer.
- ™ Avoid talking about the church’s politics, and always have your eyes fixed on the Lord’s great Day - so you would see the heavenly bride coming from all peoples, nations, and tongues; adorned with our Lord Jesus Christ’s righteousness, as the heavenly hosts sing for her in an eternal marriage.
- ™ Work from all your will for the salvation of your brethren, as you depend on the powerful grace of God. Know that God is far more eager for your salvation than you are!



- ™ If you are being tempted with depression or belittlement, remember your relationship with God. Remember that you are a member of the house of the Lord. God, Himself, is your Father; and all the patriarchs, the prophets, the disciples, the apostles, and all the saints are your brethren. All the heavenly hosts are your friends. All of them care about you, for you are a member of the house of the Lord! All of heaven is interested in your salvation, for the Lord of heaven Himself was crucified for your sake.
- ™ Many times the devil tries to make us doubt the path we have chosen. This doubting causes the married person to complain about and regret his marriage; while the single person complains about his being single; the priest complains about his involvement in the personal and familial problems of others; and the monk regrets not having a spiritual service in the world. The devil desires to have everyone anxious, unhappy, regretful, and complaining, instead of being thankful and rejoicing in the Lord.
- ™ Never take the “little” temptations for granted: like sluggishness, laziness, procrastination, negligence, impure thoughts, or worry about tomorrow.
- ™ Feeling content and complacent causes your life to become stagnant, and loses its liveliness and continuous growth.
- ™ Being preoccupied with worldly matters and not focusing on the Savior and the heavenly hosts causes the soul to be burdened and fall down to perversity; thus incapable of enjoying eternal happiness.



What the Fathers Say about a Happy Life

- ™ **He who holds God is happy.**
- ™ Turn your soul to your Creator; for He is the Source of our happiness and perfect righteousness.
- ™ When you follow the Lord, you will desire happiness, and you will reach it; for **He is Happiness itself.**
- ™ Man, the rational creation, is a great and noble creature; yet when he falls, nothing can satisfy him but God. Who, or what, can grant him comfort?
- ™ Be aware my beloved, that **the joy of all joys can only come through rejoicing in the Holy Trinity, Who created us in His image.**

St. Augustine

- ™ Your salvation does not reside in wealth, so don't fear poverty; nor does it reside in physical health, so don't fear sickness; nor in how people look at you, so don't be concerned about what they say about you; nor in life here on earth, so don't fear death... Rather, your salvation lies in holding onto the true virtues like being honest and just. These are things that no one - not even Satan himself - can take away from you as long as you care enough to keep them.
- ™ Someone might say: "Didn't Satan ruin Adam's pure nature and cause him to lose paradise?" No. In fact, the reason for Adam's fall was his own negligence, laxity, and lack of self-control. Recall that Satan, using various strong temptations, was unable to make Job



yield to him. Thus, how could he gain control over Adam using fewer temptations unless Adam let him?!

- ™ If someone suffers harm, it is of his own doing; and not the doing of others unto him. For if all the creatures on the earth and the sea gathered to fight a man, they will not be able to harm him if he is keeping watch over himself and was wise in the Lord.
- ™ Referring to a very evil festival, (St. John Chrysostom said), "Yesterday, although it was a feast of the devil, you preferred to keep your own spiritual feast and you accepted our words rightfully. You spent most of the day here in the church drinking a self-controlling drink, and dancing in St. Paul's chorus. Thus, you gained a double benefit for you have kept yourselves safe from the dirty dances of the drunken people, and you have also enjoyed the spiritual dances of the religious rituals. You shared in the cup of wine, from which no concentrated wine is poured; rather it is filled with spiritual wine. You became a flute and lyre to the Holy Spirit. While others were dancing for the devil, you were here preparing yourselves to be spiritual vessels; and you allowed the Holy Spirit to fill your souls so He would breathe His grace in your hearts. Thus, you have formed a harmonious, joyful symphony; not only to mankind, but also to the heavenly powers.
- ™ Let the kings come to see the Heavenly King, Who came down to earth without any angels or archangels or thrones or powers; although He hadn't forgotten them nor did He leave them not with care...



Let the women come to glorify Him, Who was born from a woman in order to turn the bitter pains of labor into joy.

Let the virgins come to the Son of the virgin to joyfully see Him.

Let the children come to worship Him, Who became a little Child and Who prepares the suckling for the babies, and prepares their mouths to offer hymns to Him. He allowed for them all to become martyrs in the days of Herod.

Let the men come to Him, Who became a Man in order to lift the misery from his servants.

Let the shepherds come to the Good Shepherd, Who gave His life to save His servants.

Let the priests come to the One, Who became an Archpriest after the order of Melchizedek.

Let the slaves come to the One, Who took the image of a slave in order to free them all from slavery.

Let all the sinners come to behold the Lamb of God, Who took away the sins of the world.

Let all the people rejoice, and I will rejoice with them, sharing with those, who are celebrating His birthday. I don't want my sharing in the joy to be only through playing the lyre or the flute, or by holding torches, but by holding the cradle of the Baby in my hands for this is my Hope; this is my Life; this is my Salvation; this is my Flute; and this is my Lyre."

St. John Chrysostom