

“That my joy may be in you”: Easter Audio Meditation of the Prelate

In chapter 20 of his Gospel, Saint John describes what happened on the day of our Lord’s Resurrection: “On the evening of that day, the first day of the week, the doors being shut where the disciples were, for fear of the Jews, Jesus came and stood among them and said to them, ‘Peace be with you’” (*Jn 20:19*).

The disciples react with joy. It is the joy of Easter, a joy that the Church encourages us to renew in our souls during this Easter season. But it is a joy that should be permanent, since Christ has risen and is always with us.

Shortly before the Passion, he said to the apostles, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you. Abide in my love. These things I have spoken to you, that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full.” It is wonderful to realize that Christ wants us to be happy and have our hearts filled with joy. And Christ also gives us the reason for this, when he says, “I have told you these things that my joy may be in you, and that your joy may be full,” adding, “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you” (cf. *Jn 15:9-11*).

We have to realize that the overriding source of our joy, the reason for our happiness, is God’s love for us, which is not just any love. “As the Father has loved me, so have I loved you.” That is, Christ loves us. What He says to the apostles is meant for all of us, and that is why He wanted it to be in the Gospel. Our Lord loves us with the same love—nothing less—as that with which God the Father loves Christ.

This is the great source of our joy, and this is what our Lord tells us: “I have told you this so that you may be happy.” This is the foundation. Later on, Saint John sums this up in one of his letters with a solemn formula that expresses, as it were, the apostles’ own experience in interacting with Christ: “We know and believe the love God has for us” (*1 Jn 4:16*).

This is so. And now we, Lord, while praying, while doing a short time of prayer, we want to have this faith truly to believe in the love You have for us, so that our joy may be full. For our Lord wants us to be happy with this complete joy, which also means that it be permanent, that we always be happy. Along these lines Saint Paul tells us in one of his epistles: this is God’s will, that you be happy, that you be joyful.

“The disciples were glad when they saw the Lord” (*Jn 20:20*). And we, how do we see the Lord, so that we too, like the disciples, may be happy? We see Him with faith, with the eyes of faith. And we see Him in a special way, a very special way, in the Eucharist, whenever we are in front of a Tabernacle with the faith that Christ is truly present there and that He has remained there for each of us, to give Himself to us as food, so that we identify ourselves with Him. To see our Lord we certainly need faith, and that is why we have such a great need for our faith to grow.

That is why it is so good to pray frequently, like the apostles, who asked our Lord, “*Adauge nobis fidem!*”, Increase our faith! (*Lk 17:5*).

And especially now, in this Easter season: Lord, increase our faith in the love You have for us so that, as you want—by telling us about the love You have for us—our happiness and our joy may truly be complete.

But we cannot ignore the great many things that can rob us of our joy, that actually do rob us of joy: so much suffering—personal, at times—of loved ones, physical and moral pain, misfortunes... And now, thinking about all the suffering caused by the pandemic that the whole world is experiencing, and so many other misfortunes, and so many understandable reasons not to be happy. Nevertheless, we can be happy—we must be happy!—if we have faith in God’s love. But our faith is in what we cannot see. And that is why so often we can think and react: how is this possible? Why does God allow this? Often He allows it because it depends on human freedom—and the value of freedom is so great. So many evils in the world are the result of the misuse of freedom. But other times this is not the case, and we don’t understand, but that is the moment for faith, the moment for faith ...

We see that God, in his providence, also asked our Lady and Saint Joseph for great faith—and they had it! Even when they didn’t understand. We should recall the scene where our Lord was twelve-years-old and stayed in Jerusalem without telling our Lady and Saint Joseph. No one understands why our Lord did that. The Gospel says that our Lady and Saint Joseph were looking for Him anxiously and did not understand it. When they found Him they asked, “Why have you done this to us?” And He gives them a surprising reason: Didn’t you know that I had to take care of my Father’s concerns? And the Gospel says that they did not understand our Lord (cf. *Lk 2:41-50*).

So we shouldn’t worry, we shouldn’t become anxious because we don’t understand God’s plans. From the human point of view we may often find our joy threatened. But we should not worry. Let us recover (let us reconquer!—because sometimes we lose it), let us reconquer our joy with an act of faith in God’s love, with faith that God is beside us and truly *Dominus tecum*, as the angel said to our Lady (cf. *Lk 1:28*). And he always says it to us as well; the Lord is with us: “I will be with you every day until the end of the world” (cf. *Mt 28:20*). He said this to the apostles and He says it to us.

We have to be happy, we have to strive to be happy. Not with a superficial joy, much less an irrational one that is unaware of reality. If it is a joy rooted in God’s love, it is compatible with the Cross. The expression of Saint Josemaría comes to mind when he assured us that “joy has its roots in the shape of a Cross” (*The Forge*, no. 28), in the Cross of Christ, which is what has redeemed us, what enables us to have faith, what enables us to have love, what enables us to have a deep, authentic joy. There we find the root of our joy, in the Cross of Christ.

And that is also why sorrow and suffering in our life can be the source of a joy that spreads to others: a joy that should never be selfish, individualistic. In fact, authentic joy—even purely human joy, which is good—is in itself expansive. Joy tends to expand. And even more so does deep spiritual joy; Christian joy tends to spread to others, to those who are by our side, to everyone, with our smile, with good humor, with our help, with our concern for others in such a way that—as Saint Josemaría liked to say—we are all, we try to be (despite our own limitations and mistakes) *sowers of peace and joy*.

Yes, to those close to us. But we can also be sowers of joy in the whole world with our prayer. We can bring the whole world to our prayer and ask that people may be happy, that people may know how to find joy even in the Cross, feeling everything as very much our own: *the world is ours*.

We recall Psalm 2 which, referring prophetically to Christ, says, “I will make the nations your heritage” (*Ps* 2:8). Well, in Christ we, especially we Christians, have been given the world as an inheritance. And we also have to realize our responsibility to feel that everything is very much our own, also the sufferings of those we don’t even know, in the furthest corner of the world, so that—with our joy and our prayer—we can also sow joy where we are unable to go physically.

Our Lady: we can imagine her as always happy, with the fullness of grace as the Mother of God. And yet she had to suffer a lot. Mary is the example of how to unite the ability to be happy (with God’s grace and asking Him for it) with one’s suffering. We see this from that scene we recalled of the Child lost and found in the temple all the way to the foot of the Cross.

Let us ask our Lady, who in the litanies of the Rosary we call *Cause of our joy*, to help us to be happy. With her intercession and motherly mediation may she obtain for us an increase in grace, an increase in strength, an increase in faith—especially faith in the love God has for us. And may the result be that in this Easter season, joy increases in our souls and spreads throughout the year, and we spread it to all those around us, and, with our prayer, to the furthest corner of the world.