



■ † Third Sunday of St. Luke

## How to Participate in the Joys and Sorrows of Others\*



**T**he Lord saw a mother weeping over the death of her son and had compassion on her. Another time He was called to a wedding and rejoiced together with the family.

He thereby showed that to share ordinary, everyday joys and sorrows is not contrary to His spirit. This is what true, reverent Christians do, who live their lives in fear of God.

However, they distinguish some of life's everyday customs from others, for much has entered into these customs that is not pleasing to God. There are customs that arise from the passions, which are devised for their indulgence. Others are nourished by vanity and cares.

He who has the spirit of Christ will be able to distinguish the good from the bad: he adheres to the one and rejects the other. He who does this with the fear of God is not alienated by others, though he does not act like them, because he always acts in a spirit of love and compassion toward the infirmities of his brothers.

Only a spirit of zeal beyond measure rubs people the wrong way and produces disharmony and division. Such a spirit cannot refrain from teaching and criticizing.

But the one [with the spirit of Christ] is only concerned with ordering his and his family's life in a Christian way. He does

not permit himself to interfere in the affairs of others, saying to himself, “Who made me their judge?”

**H**e quietly makes everyone well disposed towards him, and inspires respect for the practices to which he adheres. He who orders everyone around makes himself unloved, and evokes disapproval for even his good practices.

**H**umility is needed in such cases—Christian humility. It is the source of Christian good sense, which knows how to act properly in a given situation.



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(\*) St. Theophan the Recluse, *Thoughts for Each Day of the Year According to the Daily Church Readings from the Word of God*.