



Brief Patristic Messages



Joy in Christ: The Sure Indicator of Our Spiritual Condition

“Rejoice evermore”

“Rejoice in the Lord always, and again I say, Rejoice”

(I Thessalonians 5:16; Philippians 4:4)

*† His Eminence, Metropolitan
Cyprian of Oropos and Fili*

IT IS, unfortunately, not an uncommon phenomenon for us to see pious Faithful in whose faces joy, good cheer, the peace of the Comforter, and the light of Grace do not blossom forth.

There are many excuses for this: family troubles, difficulties at work, various mishaps, economic misfortunes, health problems, unpleasant developments in national and political life, etc.

Can it be that all of these things constitute substantial obstacles, such that a Christian is thereby deprived of the peace of the Holy Spirit and the joy of Christ?

Certainly not; for the joy of the pious Faithful derives not from the absence of life’s tribulations and afflictions, but from the *presence* of our Savior in their *hearts*.

When a Christian has a humble attitude and laments for his sins; when his pursuit is “*always that which is good, both among yourselves, and to all men*”; when he strives to keep God’s com-

mandments; when he continually partakes of the Immaculate Mysteries; when he constantly reflects with gratitude on the love and gifts of God; when he cultivates the unceasing *prayer of the heart*—then, he lives in Christ and with Christ; that is, he has the Giver of joy and peace in his heart.

The believer who is God-Bearing and Christ-Bearing “*rejoices in the Lord always,*” and his presence in the world is a testimony to the Resurrection and to Pentecost; it is a *revelation* of the Kingdom of Heaven and the bliss of the Age to come, of which he already has a foretaste.

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TO THOSE who would object that it is impossible for one to rejoice at all times, St. Basil the Great wrote a marvelous homily, entitled, “*Concerning Thanksgiving,*” in which he confronts those who dare “*to accuse St. Paul of laying down things that are impossible for us.*”

The blessed joy of Christians is the indicator of their spiritual condition: a lack of joy—and, indeed, of unceasing joy—betokens a deficiency in *communion* with Christ, and also with our brother.

It is especially when there is no love for our neighbor in our hearts, when we malign and hurt him, when we belittle and despise him, and when we cause him distress and upset, that the Lord is *missing* from our *hearts* and we have no *communion* with Him.

The Apostle Paul urges us to “*follow that which is good,*” by which he means:

“*Be intensely and exceedingly eager to do good to each other, that is, to your Christian fellow-believers and to all; that is, [even] to the unbelieving and the godless.*”

The opposite—that is, arrogance and vengeance, coldness, apathy and listlessness, hatred for our brother and ruthlessness—

will make us to resemble the bee, as St. John Chrysostomos strikingly notes:

“Do you not see how the bee dies as soon as it has injured someone with its sting? By that animal, God instructs us not to grieve our neighbor, because it is we who thereby first greet death. For, in striking at them, we may perhaps pain them temporarily; but we ourselves shall not live any longer, just as this animal does not.”

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THE MOST BLESSED *Theotokos* is the one to whom we address the salutation: “*Rejoice, joy of all generations,*” and in the *Paraklesis* (Services of Supplication) to her, we chant the very beautiful hymn:

“Fill my heart with joy, O Virgin, who didst receive the fullness of joy and didst cause the sorrow of sin to disappear.”

Let us repeat this joyful *Troparion* frequently and sincerely, praying to our All-Holy Mother that she count us worthy to rejoice in the Lord evermore, in the joy of the Resurrection and the Kingdom. Amen!

*Feast of the Entrance of the Theotokos
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