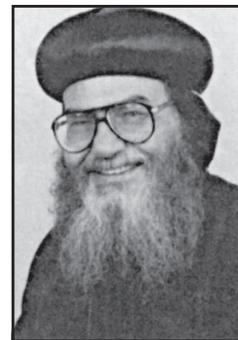




Keys to a Life of Joy

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The question that probably looms large in the mind of youth today is “How can I obtain a stable life of joy that is devoid of hesitation or deficiency? Why do we sometimes lose the feeling of joy and find we are confined to feelings of pain or remorse, or to feelings of fear and anxiety?”

What are the Keys to a Life of Joy?

We can, when we examine the experiences in our life realistically, discover four basic keys to a blessed life of joy:



1) *The Key of Repentance:* You have surely, my young brethren, heard a great deal about this key, but you might have stopped right there. Have you actually experienced moments in which you humbled yourself at the Lord Christ’s feet declaring your remorse at a sorrowful and sinful past and your determination to lead a holier life?

Do you not agree with me that the experience of our lamentable sins is the essentially discordant note in the harmony of a beautiful life? There is not one time when my life has gone down the precipice of sin that I have not felt torn by pain, devastated by remorse, and filled with fear!

If you need scientific proof of the truth that it is sin that makes us lose our peace, the writings of psychologists attest to this truth. There is a play by the French philosopher, Sartre, which revolves around

the theme of remorse entitled “The Wolves.” These wolves are the painful pricks of the conscience of the sinful soul.

If we look for a sound way of dealing with the heavy load of remorse that overwhelms us as a result of a fall, we will only find it in light of the Holy Gospel.

The psychological method may try to calm us, making us feel that everyone sins, and that it is perfectly normal and commonplace, and that what is required is a stronger will so that we finally overcome this destructive slavery. The philosophical approach, at least Sartre’s, advises us to reject remorse and to revolt against it. This revolution is nothing but the strongest evidence of its continued presence within us.

The Lord Jesus Christ enlightens our hearts and calls us to Him, saying, “he who comes to Me I will in no wise cast out.” Christianity transforms remorse into repentance, and the sorrows of sin into the joy of prayer and union with God. The Lord Jesus Christ opens His loving heart to the repentant sinner and makes him go home justified.

The Lord Christ is ready to forgive all your painful past and not to remember your sins any longer. All He asks of you is that you be convinced of the terribleness of sin, transgression, and separation from God and that you return to His Fatherly bosom with a determined heart. The Lord Christ does not only forgive, but He also makes haste to purify the heart until He lifts it above sin. If we sin, “we have an Advocate with the Father, Jesus Christ the Righteous. (I John 2:1)”



2) *The Key of Discovering the Meaning of Life:*

The basic scourge behind the problems of the youth of this generation all over the world is a feeling that this world is trivial to the point of boredom and contempt, or a feeling that it is glorious to the point of deifying and worshipping it.

We see young people dividing into numerous groups: those who search for life in its pleasures and riches, and those who shun it in a stultifying morbid passiveness. "Why Am I here?" This is a question being studied by the philosophers and literary figures of the age. Since the youth do not receive satisfactory answers to this question they end up in the pits of immorality, atheism, and anxiety.

Life is not meaningless, and existence is not superfluous as some atheistic existentialists and some modern authors imagine. The existence of grinding tribulations, of bitter pain, or of unfortunate inequities are

not evidence of the meaningless of existence. In the few minutes that we spend with a sick person, we impart to him love and encouragement and during the moments spent by a sad person in pain, we support him with our tenderness and our practical brotherly prayers, as well as during the moments in which we pull a friend out of the fire in sin and the pit of despair. All these show us that love is the basic solution to the problem of existence.

We were created as a result of God's great love. If we travel across a world that is painful, it is to give us the opportunity to express our love for God and men. There is no greater evidence of love other than suffering pain for the Beloved. The Lord suffered for us and thus revealed His love for us and so we have to suffer also for His Name Sake and for our oppressed brothers as a expression of our love for Him and them.

Hence, we discover our mission and the meaning of life and existence; that we serve with all our hearts and so rejoice and are happy, so that we break our of our selfishness and isolation to be poured on the altar



St. Paul the Apostle



of love as holy sacrifices of service that unite and glorify humanity.



3) *The Key of Submission:* It is hard for a human to rejoice when he is in the midst of trials and tribulations. But the Apostle Paul challenges problems saying, “I now rejoice in my sufferings. (Colossians 1:24), “Therefore I take pleasure in infirmities, in reproaches, in needs, in persecutions, in distresses, for Christ’s sake. (II Corinthians 12:10)” When will the Lord open our eyes so that we discover the secret of confident submission and give up our grinding worries? Our greatest problem is that our faith in the love of God is weak, as is our faith that “all things work together for good to those who love God. (Romans 8:24)”

Our real problem is that we let our problems come between the Lord and us and so we do not see Him beyond them. The image of the face of Love and the work of His powerful right hand disappear from view. It would be better for us to put the Lord Jesus between the problems and us and so we see them, through Him.

Albert Camus once said, “This life deserves suicide, but I do not prefer this.” But we say to his likes: “Welcome to pain, as long as we are in the bosom of God and within the embrace of the Lord Jesus. Welcome to the fears about our future and to the unknown in life. Everything radiates with light if we take it with us into the presence of the Lord Jesus Christ.



4) *The Key of an Eternal Outlook:* Voltaire said long ago, “Man is born, suffers, and then dies.” Beckett said, “Man emerges from the darkness of the womb and goes to the darkness of the tomb, traversing the darkness of life.” And Freud said, “Let us leave Heaven to the angels and the birds.”

But let us say with full confidence, “Take from the Lord Jesus Christ light to show you the path, for eternity lies before us with all its joys and Heaven with all its glories pulls us toward it. There is something beyond the grave!” El Hakim said, “He put eternity in their hearts without which man cannot know the meaning of the work that has been done from the beginning to the end.”

Truly, how did the chaste Potamiaena stand before the boiling oil and lose her earthly life with confident joy? How did St Barbara throw herself in front of the devouring fierce animals desiring such a terrifying fate? How did the procession of thirty thousand martyrs travel from Damanhour to Alexandria, singing hymns of victory on their way to the grave?

Your earthly ambitions for what is of the flesh, for material wealth, for position and prestige, will not give you joy but only anxiety. But the moments of private prayer in your room and of silent bowing between the hands of God will fill your heart with light and will show you the way.

I leave you now in the hands of God, to examine your life and search for the key to JOY. May the Lord be with your spirit.