

May God's peace and joy be with you!



A few years back, I was introduced to the spiritual writings of Fr. Jacques Philippe, a member of the Community of the Beatitudes, founded in France in 1973. He has a direct, Christocentric yet simple approach to prayer. He is a devotee of St. Thérèse of Lisieux. That alone attracts me to him. Though he has traveled to the Seattle Archdiocese and even gave a retreat at the Palisades, I was unable to attend. His books have sold over one million copies world-wide and have been translated into over 24 languages. It's clear to me from his writing is that he is in love with Jesus. That too attracts me to him.

In one of his more recent books, **Fire and Light: Learning to Receive the Gift of God**, Fr. Jacques notes, "...the Christian life [is] not primarily a tense and anxious human struggle but a welcoming of God's gifts." For too many of us, our following of Jesus seems to be a bit of a battle. What we present to others by our words and even our facial expressions and body language is sometimes a dour and negative picture. Without question, life is difficult, especially with the growing disparity between those who have and those who do not, our aging and the limitations and poorer health that comes with that. But as Fr. Philippe writes, we must have an attitude of welcoming God's gifts. That suggest that as disciples we are people of hope, trusting that our Father is involved in our world and in our lives, that God has redeemed all of creation. We believe that God has gifts to give us always and that the Spirit is ever present gifting us with opportunities.

Pope Francis teaches us that remembering "what the Lord has done for us...regenerates us." That memory, the Holy Father says, generates hope for what is to come in the future when we will meet the Son of God. Memory and hope allow Christians to live joyfully, and peace is joy lived to its perfection:

"Joy does not mean living from laugh to laugh. No, it's not that. Joy is not entertainment. No, it's not that. It is something else. Christian joy is peace, peace that is deeply rooted, peace in the heart, the peace that only God can give. This is Christian joy. It is not easy to foster this joy" (Homily of Pope Francis 28 May 2018, Casa Santa Maria).

For most of us, this positive view of God's ever-present involvement in our own lives is an attitude shift. Culturally, some of us have been taught more of a dualistic view of God, that sometimes the Holy Spirit is present and other times is not. That is not what the Catholic Church believes or teaches. God is ever-present and longs for us to receive the gifts He is constantly pouring forth.

God's ever-presence gives us reason to be people of joy, despite our individual battles or struggles. God is ever redeeming all that occurs for His purposes in all of creation. That gives us the confidence to act and persevere in difficulty. We must learn again and again to decide to trust.

Let's continue to pray for the grace to receive all the gifts that God wants to give to us in Christ Jesus through the power of His Holy Spirit.

In God's great love, hope, and mercy,

Deacon Jim