

Sunday 23rd August 2020



Joyful inside?

A sense of joy deep inside, no matter what's happening, can be a great gift.

A hugely popular film clip is the sequence in *Singing in the Rain* in which Gene Kelly dances along the street amid a downpour; apart from the energy and skill of the dance, the sheer exuberant joy expressed lifts our hearts, no matter how many times we may see it.

But dance is a particularly good medium for expressing inner feelings. In the ballet version of Charles Dickens' *A Christmas Carol*, dance very much represents the inner world of the characters: Bob Cratchit breaks away from his desk to dance fluently, revealing the joyful inner self normally crushed by his employer, Scrooge. We see Scrooge himself, as a young man, dancing – but the older man dances not a step, his movements sharp and tight, though when he wakes on Christmas Day knowing redemption, well! *Then* he dances, can hardly keep his feet still, except when he is standing on the sidelines, smiling at the joy of others.

I suspect St Paul had this inner joy. Before his dramatic meeting with the risen Christ on the road to Damascus, he was a driven, angry man, secure in his high status. After that meeting he lost the safety of his status as a card-carrying Pharisee, and faced tremendous dangers and humiliations – the list he shares in **2 Corinthians 11: 1-31** is pretty daunting, but he coped, I believe, through that inner strength he had; that inner knowledge of being called and loved by Christ. It shines through that lovely passage in Romans 8 (**Romans 8: 31-39**), the certainty that nothing can separate us from the love of God through Christ Jesus.

An inner joy is not just being happy all the time or always seeing the bright side - that can really get on other people's nerves and is more likely to win you a black eye than eternal peace!

The Jesuit Gerald O'Mahoney expresses it very well as being a 'still point' which we all have, but sense only fleetingly, and to maintain it we have to push against our own tendencies to gloom and depression on the one side and over-elation, rushing about on the other.* This still point, an inner joy, is where we are completely ourselves as God made us to be and where we function best, where, like Scrooge on Christmas Day, we can look at the people around us and rejoice for them.

From this point of stillness/joy, we can cope with all that is thrown at us by life. I'm not saying we don't struggle, because we do, I'm not saying we don't despair, because we do – *but we don't stay in those states*. That inner joy will hold us, and I fear that we're going to need to cultivate that

inner peace and joy because, while not wishing to depress anyone, it looks as if the future is not going to be easy for any of us.

In *Singing in the Rain*, truth wins through. The talented heroine is recognised, and the shrill-voiced 'star' exposed as a fraud. Inner joy brings truth to bear for everyone! Worth cultivating it!

*Gerald O'Mahony *Finding the Still Point (Exploring Prayer Series)*

Be quietly at peace with yourself so that you can face whatever life brings.



You might like to look at the two figures above. Which most represents you at this moment? Which represents you as you look at the future? Which most represents you as you look around at the people you see in the street, on television? In truth, it's fine to be either at any one time!

But do we seek that knowledge of God's love for each of us, that lets us be unhappy sometimes and happy other times without being overcome? God does love you. Always.

A Prayer:

Eternal, living Lord God our Father,
thank you, thank you for your love for each one of us,
for all of us sharing in these thoughts and prayers and for all your children, near and far.

Forgive us when we either take this love for granted or doubt it's there at all.

Forgive us when we decide that we can do all things in our own strength,
when we struggle along and blame ourselves when we fail.

Forgive us, we pray, our weaknesses and faults that everyone sees,
and those only you see, so that, forgiven, we might glow with an inner joy
that helps us see ourselves and others through the eyes of your love alone.

Remembering your great love, we pray for those who have little or no experience of love.

Those many children brought up in households where there is a chilliness of spirit,

where arguments abound or where there is violence, physical or mental,
that crushes the person within.

Lord, we pray your healing into those situations and the guiding of your Spirit
to bring people who will accept those children and parents for who they are,
your beloved children, and help rebuild shattered lives.

We bring people who, today, are going through terrible suffering –
those imprisoned for their faith or for protesting on behalf of the poor,
their families, not knowing how or where they are.

For them we pray that inner core of strength to hold them and to tell them that they are not alone,
that others remember them and pray for them; weep with them.

We bring those people who today look to the future with fear.

Those who have lost their employment and who fear losing their home too,
those who have lost loved ones and see only a bleak future ahead.

Those who are just plain scared because nothing is normal.

Lord Jesus, enfold them, we pray, in your love; may your arms wrap around them warmly,
and may the Holy Spirit motivate, we pray, those in power to truly seek the wisdom
to plan for the good of all people. We ask it in the name of Jesus,
who gave his life that all may have life in all its fullness. Amen

Blessings, Ruth