



# THE FLAME

## THE CATHOLIC DIOCESE OF RALEIGH

### CHARISMATIC RENEWAL



November 2023 issue

## JOY IN THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

By Maria Muratore

Joy is a result of having the Spirit in us. As Christians, we have the greatest reason to be full of joy. Sometimes, however, life steps in and robs us of that joy. We know we should feel it, but sometimes we just don't. The question: *Is joy something I should just wait for? Will it just come upon me?* There seems to be a great absence of joy in the lives of many people today. Recently, I have reflected on the joy of the Lord and bible verses on how to cultivate Joy. The Bible never recommends that we "rejoice", it commands us to do so (*"I will say it again: Rejoice!" Phil. 4:4*). A few questions may come to mind: *How can we suddenly have the emotion of joy? How can it be cultivated? What can we do to work on having joy?* Personally, after prayer and reflection, I decided that I want to be a more joyful person, not periodically, but consistently. I want to be a person who regularly experiences the "fullness of joy" that Christ promised. The path to joy may not be an easy one to navigate. It has become clear to me that God won't *force* the expression of joy upon us. Everything concerning God and our joy in the Lord is our own personal choice, like Adam and Eve had a choice. Recently, I heard a teaching by Fr. Patrick

Gonyeau on cultivating joy.

Joy is not only something felt within, it must be *cultivated* and *practiced*. Happiness is fleeting and random, but joy is nurtured and grown. The Bible makes it clear that certain focuses in our daily routine will lead to a greater sense of joy.

Joy Celebrates: It's a choice to give/hear testimony and react with joy and celebrating together. If the angels in heaven stop and rejoice (*"<sup>10</sup> In the same way, I tell you, there is rejoicing in the presence of the angels of God over one sinner who repents."* Luke 15:10), shouldn't we? To this day, I have never forgotten the importance to celebrate what God has done.

Joy Abides: The best way to maintain an outlook of joy is by abiding in Christ, remaining close to the Lord day by day: *"If you obey my commands, you will remain in my love, just as I have obeyed my Father's commands and remain in his love. I have told you this so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete"* John 15:10-11.

Joy Reads: I have found the greatest joy in just sitting and reading the Word of God. It Allows my mind and heart to get caught up in the truths, the adventures, the insights and the promises contained in the Bible is a fountain we should drink from regularly. *"The commandments of the Lord are right, bringing joy to the heart."* (Ps. 19:8) *"I rejoice in your word like one who finds a great treasure."* (Ps. 119:162)

## THE JOY IN THE LORD IS MY STRENGTH

*Continued:*

**Joy Sings:** Singing, whether at home, at church, prayer meetings or in my car, is a great way release the joy of the Lord in my heart. When my mind gets filled with anxious thoughts, it's a blessing to just begin to praise God and sing. Singing allows me to shift the focus from me and the circumstances of my life to the awesome character of God. *"be filled with the Spirit. Speak to one another with psalms, hymns and spiritual songs. Sing and make music in your heart to the Lord."* (Eph. 5:18-19).

**Joy Gives:** A generous spirit is a joyous spirit. Paul praised the Corinthians not only for their giving, but especially for their "cheerful" giving: *"Though they have been going through much trouble and hard times, their wonderful joy and deep poverty have overflowed in rich generosity"* 2Cor. 8:1-2

**Joy Meditates:** Our joy is renewed by remembering God, by meditating on his goodness, by recalling his specific acts of faithfulness to us *"You satisfy me more than the richest of foods. I will praise you with songs of joy. I lie awake thinking of you, meditating on you through the night. I think how much you have helped me; I sing for joy in the shadow of your protecting wings."* (Ps. 63:5-7) Joy doesn't forget. . .to remember.

**Joy Asks:** *"Ask and you will receive, and your joy will be complete."* (John 16:24)

Sometimes, we can feel guilty asking God to give us "more." It is important to remember that God wants to bless us in abundant ways, including, our physical needs. Christ made it clear that when we don't ask, we forfeit

many blessings and, as a result, much joy. **Joy Surrenders:** Sometimes to discover joy we must surrender ourselves: *"But even if I am being poured out like a drink offering on the sacrifice and service coming from your faith, I am glad and rejoice with all of you. So you too should be glad and rejoice with me (Phil. 2:17-18)."*

**Joy Serves:** Jesus came into this world not as a king, but as a servant. The heart of a genuine servant is a joyful one. When we discipline our minds to focus on God's will and the needs of others, we discover a place where joy abounds. *"Serve the Lord with gladness;"* (Ps. 100:2a).

**Joy Hopes:** Heaven is often on the mind of the most joyful of Christians. When this world lets us down, we can be reminded of our God that never will.

**Joy Enjoys:** God not only wants us to worship him, he wants us to *enjoy* Him. *"In thy presence is fullness of joy and at thy right hand pleasures forevermore (Psalm 16:11)."*

**Joy Chooses:** Choosing joy involves capturing moments of celebration, making music in your heart, discovering the reasons you have for joy, and sometimes choosing to focus on our blessings. Growing in Christ means working on our joy and the joy of those around us. That is exactly what Christ was doing in the lives of his disciples and what the Holy Spirit has come to do in us. Our hope one day is to not only enter into *heaven*. . .but also entering into *joy*! Let's hope to hear God say:

*"Well done, good and faithful servant; you were faithful over a few things, I will make you ruler over many things. Enter into the joy of your Lord."* (Matthew 25:21)

## A REFLECTION ON THE FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY

*By Miriam Antelis*

Recently, I was praying the Joyful Mysteries at Adoration and the fifth mystery stood out to me. In *The Finding of the child Jesus in the Temple*, we reflect on Mary and Joseph departing from Jerusalem after

the Passover festival, inadvertently leaving behind the 12-year-old Jesus. The passage provides a rare glimpse into Jesus' childhood and the Holy Family's dynamic. But it also made me reflect on my own relationship with Jesus.



*“Now his parents went to Jerusalem every year at the feast of the Passover. And when he was twelve years old, they went up according to custom; and when the feast was ended, as they were returning, the boy Jesus stayed behind in Jerusalem. His parents did not know it, but supposing him to be in the company they went a day’s journey, and they sought him among their kinsfolk and acquaintances; and when they did not find him, they returned to Jerusalem, seeking him.*

*After three days they found him in the temple, sitting among the teachers, listening to them and asking them questions; and all who heard him were amazed at his understanding and his answers. And when they saw him they were astonished; and his mother said to him, “Son, why have you treated us so? Behold, your father and I have been looking for you anxiously.” (Luke 2:41-48)*

## A REFLECTION ON THE FIFTH JOYFUL MYSTERY

*Continued:*

As I meditated on this mystery, I thought of how easily I lose sight of Jesus in my own life. I imagined Mary and Joseph searching for Jesus tirelessly, and I recognized that for most of my life, I haven't done the same. I had tried to find peace, joy, hope, meaning — things only the Lord can provide — apart from him. I wanted all the wonderful things Jesus offers us, without any of the sacrifice or commitment of having a relationship with him.

Mary and Joseph left Jesus behind unintentionally, but even now I often find myself distancing myself from Jesus out of fear, shame or selfishness.

Sometimes I fall into the trap of expecting Jesus to follow me, and not the other way around. I follow my own desires and place my trust in myself and others. This has only ever led me to desolation. Yet in those moments, I sometimes have the audacity to ask God, "Where are you? How could you do this to me?"

*And he said to them, "How is it that you sought me? Did you not know that I must be in my Father's house?" (Luke 2:49)*

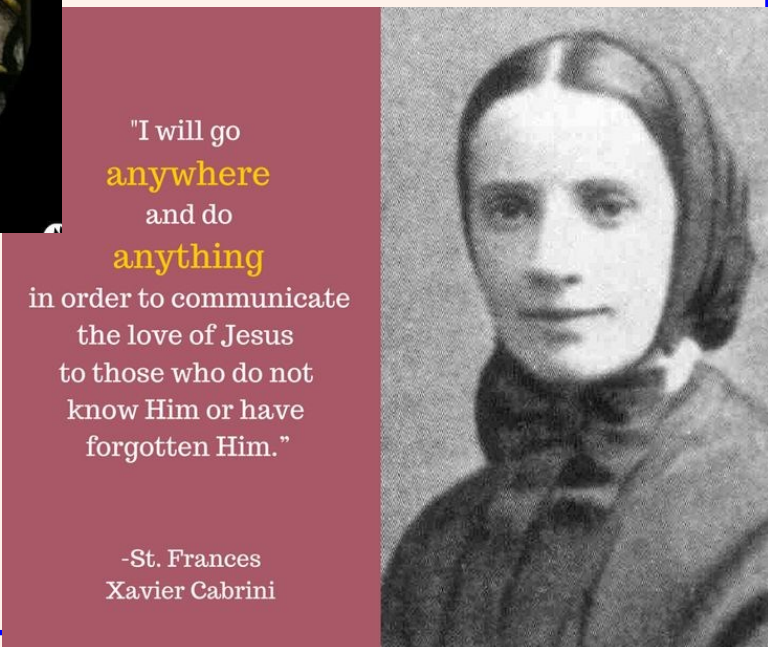
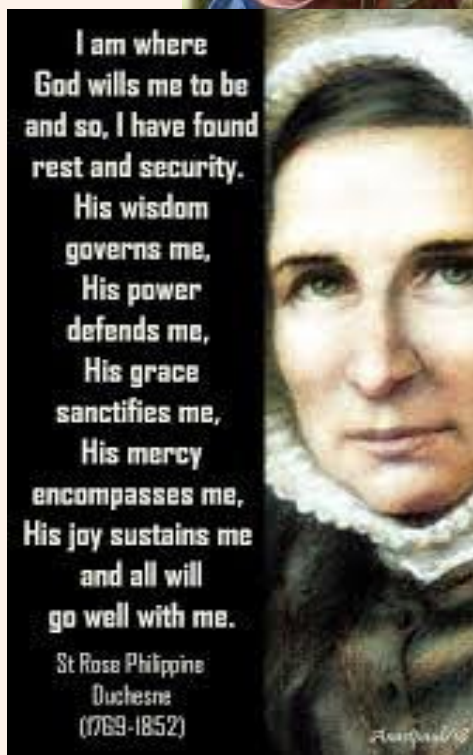
This verse struck me during my prayer.



Jesus isn't condescending in his response to Mary's admonishment, but he also doesn't apologize to his mother. He speaks matter-of-factly, as if to say, "Where else would I be?" Sitting in front of the Blessed Sacrament, I felt that Jesus was answering my own questions, "Where are you? How could you do this to me?"

Gently, he reminded me that he wasn't the one who'd been eluding me all that time. I had simply failed to look in the right place. I was raised Catholic, but I'd abandoned the faith in search of something more convenient. Through this verse, Jesus reminds me — and you — that we don't have to search far and wide to find peace, joy, hope. He's the source of all those things, and we can easily find him in his Church, which he instituted himself. Through the sacraments, he makes himself accessible and present to us in a very real and tangible way. He's always waiting for us in confession and in the Eucharist. All we have to do is show up.

# NOVEMBER SAINTS ALL SAINTS DAY NOVEMBER 1ST!!!



## **UPCOMING EVENTS:**

### **November 17, 2023**

Revival Night at St. Michael the Archangel, Cary 7:00 PM  
-Praise and Worship with Prayer Teams available

### **December 9, 2023**

Annual Family Christmas Party Celebration-6:00-9:00PM:  
St. Andrew the Apostle Parish Fellowship Hall, Apex

### **December 29, 2023**

Healing Mass St. Joseph, Raleigh 7:00PM

### **COMING FOR 2024!**

*-Revival Nights for the Eucharistic Revival Year  
at St. Michael the Archangel:*

*Feb 2nd, May 10th, and Aug 9th 2024-Praise and Worship with  
Prayer Teams available*

*- Healing Masses, Workshops, Conference and Seminars*

*\*dates to be announced*

*\*For information about prayer meeting contacts, events and more,  
visit our website at <https://ccsraleigh.weebly.com/>*