

A Meaningful Life

Rejoice with those who rejoice, the Bible tells us, and mourn with those who mourn.

It is not unusual that I have to do both on the same day, now rejoicing with the parents of a healthy newborn baby, and a short while later, grieving with the parents who have just lost their child. This week my wife and I celebrated the birthday of our son, John, but we found time to attend the funeral of a teenage boy who lost a long battle with leukemia.

Life is like that. We must learn to laugh and cry on the same day. Life is a collage of sweet and bitter experiences, of joy and sadness. We can't wait till all is well before we smile. That would be futile because it will never be 'all' right in this world.

Nor should we drown in the depths of gloom, for even in the darkest hour, there is always a glimmer of hope. Consider Jesus. During crucifixion, he was able to endure the cross for the joy that was set before him. Even during his agony, joy was not far from him.

So, whether we like it or not, life is a bed of roses - with thorns and all. We must learn, like Job, to receive both good and trouble from the Lord. In happiness, we should be thankful to God for all his good gifts. In trouble and distress, we should trust him all the more and hold on tight to him. As James tells us, Is anyone among you in trouble? Let them pray. Is anyone happy? Let them sing songs of praise.

With God, joy is exceedingly joyful, while sadness, though still painful, is more bearable. That's why Peter tells us to cast all our cares on him, knowing that he cares for us. On the other hand, without God, being alone, sadness leads to despair, and even 'joy' is mere folly.

This then is my prayer to the dear readers of this letter, that in the coming year we may learn to live 'coram Deum' – in the conscious presence of God. To walk with him, rejoicing, hiding in the shadow of the Almighty. Let the invisible hand of Providence lead wherever God wills – in green pastures or through the valley of the shadow of death. The only thing that matters is the comforting presence of God in every step of the way.

That is a life worth living; that is the only life that makes sense.