

Being joyful is first step in honoring God



Karin von Voigtlander/Catholic Courier

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2,000 years ago. For example, nowhere in Scripture is Mary of Magdala named as a prostitute. But Scripture scholars agree that she is apostle to the Apostles, the first one sent by the risen Jesus to proclaim the Easter Gospel.

Today I write about the recent article on the Diocesan Synod ("Anniversary of synod that changed the diocese," Oct. 2). Some of the truth was left out, with regard to Synod Goal Three, "The Dignity of Women." Not only was the Women's Commission revitalized, but an Office of Women was created for the first time. As Director of this Office, I worked closely with the Commission to address four issues raised up by the people of this diocese. The article named two: women's leadership in Church and violence against women. People also requested help with the use of inclusive language in church and women's spirituality. To this end, the Inclusive Language Committee of the Commission wrote a fine, comprehensive educational piece entitled "All God's People." It is to be found in a hardbound notebook put out by the Office and Commission, entitled "Advancing the Dignity of Women in Church and Society." Every parish was given one of these notebooks. If you can't find it, try to locate it and dust it off. There's still much good information within its covers.

Another truth is this. The tenure of the Office was short-lived, a scant two and a

half years. But much work remains to be done to honor both the vision of Jesus and the leadership of courageous women at the dawn of Christianity, like Mary of Magdala.

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How many will perish?

To the editor:

Recently an 18-year-old girl visited the Hayward, California, Planned Parenthood to get a prescription for the abortion pill, RU-486, to end her seven-week pregnancy. A few days later she was bleeding severely, in acute pain and unable to walk, and her boyfriend rushed her to a medical center where she was given painkillers and released. She died a few days later. She hadn't aborted all of the unborn baby. She had fragments left in her and had a massive systemic infection and went into septic shock.

Last year the *Washington Times* reported that the deaths of two women who took RU-486 had prompted the Food and Drug Administration to issue warning letters to physicians.

How many more women have to die before we realize that this is not the safe and harmless pill that it has been presented to be?

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It is the supreme law that we love and honor God.

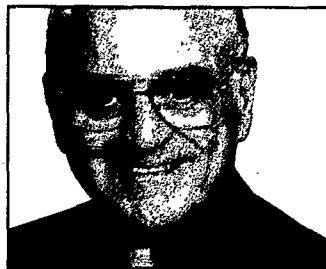
But in order to honor God we at least have to trust him. Trust is the love answer. Therefore, every time you make a decision to turn away from your fears, you please and honor him. The saints and mystics agree on this.

Julian of Norwich wrote, "The greatest honor you can give to almighty God is to live joyfully because of the knowledge of his love." She got this from St. Paul who said: "Rejoice always. In all circumstances give thanks to the Lord for this is the will of God for you in Christ Jesus."

Decide once and for all to live joyfully? It doesn't mean that good feelings follow immediately. It is simply a choice of joy over fear. Be patient.

People get into a bad habit of thinking that fear helps protect them from danger. In fact, fear only adds to the woes of life. Psychologists tell us that 95 percent of our worries are about future things that never happen. Trusting God eliminates all this needless worry. You have to learn to go against your natural fears.

Living joyfully is possible, but not for those who cling relentlessly to their fears. They would rather see themselves as victims than as carriers of divine



Father John Catoir

Spirituality for Today

love and joy. They do not have faith enough to trust that God will supply whatever they are lacking. This is not an easy leap of faith, I admit, but trust demands a radical change.

Those who do not choose to change will continue to wallow in self-pity. Some present themselves to the world as poor helpless creatures in order to get attention and sympathy. They create their own emotional pain by trying to do too much on their own. By reacting fearfully to the shocks and traumas of life with little or no trust in God, they forfeit joy.

When people like that come to me and tell me their story, I try not to give them pity, instead I usually ask this disturbing question: "What would happen if today you decided to be joyful? What changes would you make in your thinking, in your activities, in your relationships?"

I wait for a reaction.

Sometimes they say: "Haven't you been listening? Are you serious? You can't just decide to be joyful." I smile and answer: "Oh, but yes you can."

Didn't Jesus say, "Stop thinking about tomorrow, sufficient unto the day are the day's troubles"? He said we can and we must control our thoughts.

To honor God, you first have to put your trust in him. The decision to be joyful is the first step. Living in fear is not a happy alternative. Choose joy over sorrow. Decide to live joyfully. Contemplate the joyful presence of God within your soul. Always remember that pleasure comes from the delights of the senses, but true joy comes from within.

The Joy of Being is another name for the divine Trinity dwelling within your soul. Train your will to obey the Lord, and be joyful.

In my book *Enjoy Your Precious Life* (Alba House), I give some techniques to help you attain joy. Honor God by trusting him, and in the process contribute to your own happiness in a new, liberating way. "Come to me all you who are burdened, and I will give you rest."

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