

# Accepting God's will keeps spirit healthy

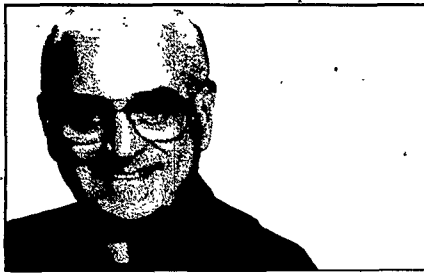
Accepting God's will is the goal of a healthy spiritual life. Acceptance is what it means to be holy.

Holiness is not the reward of a lifetime of loving service. We give a lifetime of loving service because we are holy. Holiness is not what happens to us if we are kind and forgiving. We are kind and forgiving because we are holy. Acceptance is key.

Those who have attained any degree of holiness have done so because they have a basic disposition to do God's will. This also implies a willingness to accept what he allows to happen to us, even when we do not fully understand it at the time.

Lots of bad things happen to good people. There is an abundance of misery and injustice in the world. Acceptance doesn't mean that we should become absolutely passive. It is normal to complain when we are getting pushed around.

If one is disposed to do God's will, however, then one learns to accept



Father John Catoir

## Spirituality for Today

the kingdom of God despite the negativity all around us. ("Thy will be done," "Thy kingdom come.") The soul is in the right disposition for further growth when it reacts with faith, not emotions.

There will be doubt and confusion all the way along. Even the saints lived in emotional turmoil as they tried to lift up their spirits and stay the course. This constant effort to do God's will, accepting what is unavoidable, is a sure sign of holiness. We are gaining heaven one day at a

time.

Father Thomas Merton, the Trappist monk who wrote *Seven Storey Mountain*, was no stranger to controversy and suffering. He wrote a helpful book on solitude in which he revealed his interior struggle. Here is a lovely prayer from that book:

"My Lord God, I have no idea where I am going. I do not see the road ahead of me. I cannot know for certain where it will end. Nor do I really know myself. The fact that I think I am following your will does not mean that I am actually doing so. But I believe the desire to please you actually does in fact please you. And I hope that I have that desire in all that I am doing. I hope that I will never do anything apart from that desire. And I know that if I do that, you will lead me by the right road. Though I may seem lost and in the shadow of death, I will not fear, for you are ever with me, and you will never leave me to face my perils alone."

This humble prayer expresses what most of us feel so often in our spiritual lives. We are always trying to rise above the confusion and doubt. Rising to the level of cheerful acquiescence takes time, but with God's grace it is possible.

We know with certainty that he loves us with an infinite love and wants to give us a share in his happiness. Trust him. Think much more about his love and much less about your unworthiness.

And if in the process of fighting against injustice or correcting abuses you get burned by the opposition, don't be discouraged. As the song goes, "Just pick yourself up, brush yourself off and start all over again."

In this way you can die in the peaceful knowledge that even though you were confused, you tried to do your best.

Father John Catoir is a columnist for Catholic News Service.

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