

Dear Saints,

What does it mean to live in the joy of the Gospel?

This is an especially helpful question during the season of Easter. I believe there are three things that really allow us to live with the joy of the Gospel.

The first element of Gospel joy is the forgiveness of sins. If you have done many stupid and sinful things like I have, it will come back and haunt you at some point. The devil, the world, and even your old sinful flesh will not allow you to forget. This is why we constantly need reminded that Jesus' work on the cross is finished once and for all. Your sin is truly forgiven. St. John reminds us that "if we confess our sins, He is faithful and just to forgive us our sins and to cleanse us from all unrighteousness." (1 Jn 1:9)

You may suffer consequences from your sin. Your sin is fully paid for, but God may leave the temporal consequences in place to either humble you or let you serve as an example to others. But whatever is in your past does not determine your worth or standing with God. No matter what you have done, you can hold your head up high with your dignity intact. God forgives your sin and restores your dignity. When you are free of sin and have dignity, you can indeed have Gospel joy!

The second element of Gospel joy is the presence of Christ. Jesus does not leave us to our own devices. He gives you His Supper so that you not only have the assurance of your standing with Him, but you also have the real presence of Christ. Jesus joins Himself to you in His Supper.

As Jesus says in St. John concerning the resurrection, "In that day you will know that I am in My Father, and you in Me, and I in you." (14:20) The presence of Christ brings true Gospel joy!

The third element of joy we have is the glory that awaits us. No matter how much we suffer here in this time and place, we know that a better time and place awaits us. A place where there will be no more suffering. (Revelation 21:4) As Paul quotes Isaiah, "What no eye has seen, nor ear heard, nor the heart of man imagined, what God has prepared for those who love Him." (1 Cor 2:9; c.f. 2 Cor 12:2-4) Jesus' resurrection from the dead is proof that we will inherit the new heavens and new earth. Indescribable joy awaits us!

We often live without this Gospel joy, and it is good to be reminded about it. We do not have to live with any regret. We do not have to live as those without hope. We do not have to worry about our future. We have Jesus!

In Christ,  
Pastor