Franciscan Living

Take Delight in the Lord

By Francine Gikow, OFS

I remember when each of my children was placed in my arms for the first time! I examined each one, marveling over every finger and toe, with their eyes gazing upon me! My children heard my voice and were comforted. I delighted in them, and they delighted in me.

Psalm 37, verse 4, tells us to "Take delight in the Lord and He will give you the desires of your heart." If the desire we have is to love God, then we must learn to delight in Him. How then do we do this?

Delight, I suppose, is closely aligned with wonder and awe. However, I believe there is a difference. Wonder and awe arise in our hearts spontaneously as we view a rainbow, a beautiful sunset, or some other unexpected occurrence. We take extreme pleasure and satisfaction in the rainbow, sunset, etc.

In comparison, delight, when used as a verb, means "to please someone greatly.[1]" It could mean that I please someone else, or it could be reversed: when someone else pleases me. Delight, therefore, can be active and reciprocal: My God delights in me, and I take delight in him. This circle of delight allows joy to permeate our relationship…and with God, isn't that the mystery of God living within us? After all, Love (God, himself) is fertile, abundant, and never-ending.

In scripture there are numerous citations of God's delighting in us: "…I daily was his delight" (Prov 8:30) and "…delighting in the sons of men." (Prov 8:31). But how do we take delight in *him*? How do we make a connection with God to do this?

To find delight in God is intentional—we must make some effort. We have to slow down and allow the God of our delight into our lives. We can find this delight as we gaze upon God through our persistence in prayer, scriptural encounters, and our availability to Him in the sacraments (especially the Eucharist). In this way, we not only intellectually "know" God but we also have the ability to encounter him viscerally—in our body, heart, and soul. We begin to understand how to take delight in Him as scripture points to those who pursue the wisdom of God as "an unfailing treasure for men; those who get it obtain friendship with God …" (Wis.7:14) "and in friendship with her [wisdom], pure delight…" (Wis 7:18).

You may want to read in Solomon's book of Wisdom, (Chapter 7) the attributes of wisdom, which is really another name for the Holy Spirit. Read and meditate upon it. Take one attribute each day and stay with it and let it speak to you. Let it become your prayer of praise for the attributes of the Holy Spirit: "…irresistible, beneficent… penetrating through all spirits… pure and most subtle" and is a "pure emanation of the glory of the Almighty… a reflection of eternal light, a spotless mirror of the working of God and an image of his goodness." (Wis 7:25-26)

As we contemplate, we make ourselves available to God so he can touch our hearts in order that we delight in him. If we stay with this delight, then the second half of Psalm 37:4 becomes evident: "…he will give you the desires of your heart." God IS the ultimate desire of our hearts. I pray that we do not lose our delight and desire for him.

As our father, St. Francis says:

"Therefore,
let us desire nothing else,
let us want nothing else,
let nothing else please us and cause us delight, except our Creator, Redeemer, and Savior, the one true God…" (ER: 23:9)

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[1] https://languages.oup.com/google-dictionary-en/