

things contribute little to happiness; the powers of the soul are inactive, the body itself languishes, man is wretched—even in the midst of prosperity.

By the practice of spiritual joyfulness, thou wilt render thyself dear to Me, who love him that gives cheerfully; useful to thy neighbor, who will be pleasantly stimulated to that which is good: lastly, beneficial to thy own self, who, by this practice alone, wilt perform several acts of virtue.

What more? Behold! who is the man, that desires life, who loves to see good days? Cheerfulness of heart, this is the life of man; and good days, the best of days, which are passed in God's grace, which is like a Paradise amid blessings.

Now, spiritual joyfulness is a most certain mark of the state of grace.

The joyfulness of the just, therefore, is present felicity, and a presage of everlasting bliss.

3. What is spiritual joyfulness, except the good disposition of the soul—showing that for My sake, she is truly satisfied?

It is not, therefore, founded on nature, but on grace: it does not depend on the peculiarity of one's character, but on the disposition of the heart: it has for its object not sensual, but spiritual things.

Worldly joyfulness is hurtful; it leads to grief and bitter gnawings of the mind: natural joyfulness is inconstant, subject to frequent sadness: but spiritual joyfulness is steady and wholesome.

A heart of good will, together with grace, produces this holy joyfulness; fervent piety gives it expansion: victory over one's natural inclinations makes it solid.

4. The devil, who loves depression of spirits,

knowing how powerfully spiritual cheerfulness acts against him, seeks to assail it by every means, to destroy it by false reasonings, or to diminish it by vain subtleties.

Be on thy guard, My Child, lest thou be caught by him. If thou yieldest to this promoter of sadness, he will not be satisfied with depriving thee of the blessings of holy joyfulness, but, seeing thee disposed according to his wishes, he will attack and tempt thee in the most dangerous manner.

Whatsoever may be suggested, whatsoever may befall thee, give no admittance to gloominess, which depresses the heart. This direful evil dries up the very bones, stupefies reason itself. Wherever it reigns, understanding disappears: yea, wherever sadness of heart prevails, every misfortune is found.

It may come to pass occasionally, My Child, that, without knowing from what cause it proceeds, thou feelest thyself inclined to a certain irksome sadness. When this happens, do thou pray again and again, stir up thy fervor, and employ other suitable means, that thou mayst preserve thy gladness of heart.

5. Often also, contrary or adverse circumstances will present themselves, which will naturally produce their effect upon thee. These, by allowing thyself to be grieved in heart, thou wilt render more burdensome: on the other hand, by preserving a joyful heart, thou wilt make them light. Turn these things, therefore, in the best way thou canst, to the everlasting good of thy soul; and, with thy mind withdrawn from what is unpleasant, rejoice supernaturally over the greatness of thy gain.