

THE SPIRITUAL DISCIPLINE OF DANCING

(Celebration)

Celebration is central to the Spiritual Disciplines.... Without joyous celebration to infuse the other disciplines, we will sooner or later abandon them. Joy produces energy. Joy makes us strong.

(Richard Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*)

The energy needed for the disciplines comes from dancing...

(Caedmon's Call, *Dance*)

- **LIFE IN CHRIST IS CHARACTERIZED BY JOY**

At creation, *the morning stars sang together, and all the angels shouted for joy* (Job 28:7)

When Christ was born, an angel declared, *I bring you good news of great joy that will be for all the people* (Lk 2:10)

Christ told His followers His teaching was *so that my joy may be in you and that your joy may be complete* (Jn 15:11)

Joy is part of the fruit of the Spirit (Gal 5:22-23)

- **JOY CALLS FOR CELEBRATION**

Jesus said there is great *rejoicing in heaven* over one sinner who repents (Lk 15:7)

These conversions themselves are often characterized by celebration

Celebration is a command: *Rejoice in the Lord always. I will say it again: Rejoice!* (Phil 4:4)
In everything give thanks, for this is God's will for you who are in Christ Jesus (1Thes 5:18)

Even in the face of difficulty: *Consider it pure joy, my brothers and sisters, whenever you face trials of many kinds* (Jas 1:2)

Jesus celebrated so robustly he was accused of being *a glutton and a drunkard* (Lk 7:34). "Many of us lead such sour lives that we cannot possibly be accused of such things" (Foster, *Celebration of Discipline*).

Christians ought to be celebrating constantly. We ought to be preoccupied with parties, banquets, feasts, and merriment. We ought to give ourselves over to veritable orgies of joy because we have been liberated from the fear of life and the fear of death. We ought to attract people to the church quite literally by the fun there is in being a Christian. (Robert Hotchkins, University of Chicago professor)

- **WHEN GOD'S PEOPLE CELEBRATE, THEY DANCE**

Ex 15:20—Then Miriam the prophetess, Aaron's sister, took a tambourine in her hand, and all the women followed her, with tambourines and dancing.

1Sam 18:6—When the men were returning home after David had killed the Philistine, the women came out from all the towns of Israel to meet King Saul with singing and dancing, with joyful songs and with tambourines and lutes.

*2Sam 6:12-16—David went down and brought up the ark of God from the house of Obed-Edom to the City of David with **rejoicing**.¹³ When those who were carrying the ark of the Lord had taken six steps, he **sacrificed** a bull and a fattened calf. ¹⁴David, wearing a linen ephod, **danced** before the Lord with all his might, ¹⁵while he and the entire house of Israel brought up the ark of the Lord with **shouts** and the **sound of trumpets**. ¹⁶...Michal daughter of Saul...when she saw King David **leaping** and **dancing** before the Lord, she despised him in her heart*

*Luke 15:25, 31-32—Meanwhile, the older son was in the field. When he came near the house, he heard **music** and **dancing**.... The father said, **we had to celebrate and be glad** because this brother of yours is alive again; he was lost and is found.*

*Ps 30:11—You turned my wailing into **dancing**; you removed my sackcloth and clothed me with **joy***

*Ps 149:2-4—Let Israel **rejoice** in their Maker; let the people of Zion **be glad** in their King. ³Let them **praise** his name with **dancing** and **make music** to him with **tambourine** and **harp**.*

*Ps 150:3-5—**Praise** him with the sounding of the **trumpet**, **praise** him with the **harp** and **lyre**, ⁴**praise** him with **tambourine** and **dancing**, **praise** him with the **strings** and **flute**, ⁵**praise** him with the **clash of cymbals**, **praise** him with **resounding cymbals**.*

- **WHY DON'T WE DANCE?**

In Praise of Dancing

(_____, 354-430)

I praise the dance, for it frees people
 from the heaviness of matter and binds
 the isolated to community.

I praise the dance, which demands everything:
 health and a clear spirit and a buoyant soul.

Dance is a transformation of space, of time, of people,
 who are in constant danger of becoming all brain,
 will, or feeling.

Dancing demands a whole person, one who is
 firmly anchored in the center of his life, who is
 not obsessed by lust for people and things
 and the demon of isolation in his own ego.

Dancing demands a freed person, one who vibrates
 with the equipoise of all his powers.

I praise the dance.

O man, learn to dance, or else the angels in heaven
 will not know what to do with you.