

# Sadness

By Father John Catoir, JCD- 2/7/18

When I was little, I was sad because my parents wouldn't buy me a pony. (We lived in an apartment.) When I was a teen, I was sad because I had pimples. As an adult, I became sad when I started losing my hair. You might say, sadness is part of the human condition.

However, there are more serious kinds of sadness. The ones that have to do with our spirituality. I recently received this letter from a reader:

"Father, why is it that lately, when I pray, I feel like it's very rote and flat. Although my prayers come from the heart, and I have a strong faith, it's not the same as it once was. It makes me feel very sad. I never have serious doubts, but I feel I can never measure up."

I understand this kind of sadness very well. I've had my share of it over the years. It's a nostalgia over the loss of something or someone dear to you. Feeling down or unhappy because of grief or disappointment is very human.

When I was in the seminary, I prayed so hard that my mother would live to see me ordained. She suffered for years from many ailments. I trusted God, and prayed that she'd make it, but alas, she died a year before my ordination.

The normal grief period was compounded by my doubts about God's love. I believed I was called to be a priest, but new doubts flooded my mind. What if my vocation was a creation of my imagination? If God really loved me, why didn't He answer my prayers? What if I fail as a priest?

It was my dark night of the soul. I lived through it by sheer will power. The pious feelings that brought me from the Army to the seminary had evaporated. Nevertheless, I persevered.

Despite that painful year, I recovered, and was ordained On May 28<sup>th</sup>, 1960. It was a joyful day, but the grief was still lingering. My Dad and I had a good cry, and then life went on. I never looked back, and I never doubted my vocation again.

What if I had given in to those fears and dropped out. As a priest over the years, I've touched many lives through my work in the parish, through the written word (writing is a vocation within a vocation), and through my nationally syndicated TV Show, Christopher Close-up. I'm happy now that I didn't allow my sadness to deter me from enjoying my life as a priest.

To all of you who are suffering from one nagging sadness or another, if it has caused you to believe that God has withdrawn His consolation from you because you are no longer as pleasing to Him as you once were, let me tell you emphatically: **THAT IS SIMPLY NOT TRUE!**

Feelings are not facts. Only faith can give you the facts about your relationship with God. God is unchanging love. He loves you on good days and bad, during good seasons and sad. Carry on with courage! Know that the merits of your actions increase when you're not doing it for emotional gratification. But for the love of God.

When your sadness passes away, you'll see that it was a gift from God to help you bear rich and abundant good fruit for all eternity.

May the Lord be your strength and your joy as you journey through life, with all its sad moments.