

HUMOR

“Jokes are funny; good humor is an art.”

Anonymous

Given the chance to create a list of virtues, we may or may not place “humor” on that list. Yet, the ability to laugh at oneself and to take the frustrations and disappointments of life lightly is a great virtue or gift from God. One of life’s most precious yet overlooked gifts is a good sense of humor.

The Latin word for humor is *umor* which translates as “*liquid*” or “*fluid*.” Indeed, in the Middle Ages, humor was believed to be an energy that closely related to a body fluid and an emotional state. Special fluids flowed within one’s body when humor was present, and was believed to determine one’s health and disposition. A person’s mental and physical health was influenced by one’s sense of humor.

“If you don’t know how to go with the flow, you better be a good upstream swimmer.”

Humor has a profound spiritual side as well. It can help us maintain an enthusiastic spirit when there is seemingly nothing to be enthusiastic about; to enkindle life in situations that have a cloud of death hovering over them. Humor helps us let go of our self-centered impulses. When we can chuckle at ourselves, we remind ourselves that we are human, that we need to let go every so often and that we should stop playing God. It asks us, “When last did we truly let go of our anxieties, place them in God’s hands and let God dictate what is really important to us?”

“You grow up the day you have your first real laugh at yourself.”

Ethel Barrymore

For the next month we invite you to focus on humor to pray for the virtue for yourself, to thank God for the gift where it already appears, and to think of those persons you know who are examples of this virtue. Once you have identified these people, we encourage you to call them or write a note to them, telling them that you see the virtue of humor in their lives. A few examples might be:

- Persons who find it easy to laugh at themselves, who know how to go with the flow; who do not resort to anger or frustration when things go wrong..
- Those who refrain from language or humor that is destructive or insults others.
- Parents who help their children learn to laugh at themselves, and who do not put unrealistic pressures on them.
- Someone who can discuss or disagree while keeping the integrity of both sides in tact.
- Those who radiate an inner joy that comes from a light heart.

Prayer for the virtue of humor:

Loving God, thank you for giving me the gift of your Son who has shown me the path to you. Your desire for my life is to continually draw closer to you, and so I ask for the virtue of humor. Give me the grace to laugh at myself and to rejoice in my humanness. May I learn to see humor as a sign of your healing presence in my life. Grant me the wisdom to know when humor is appropriate and the grace to bring this gift into the lives of others. Help me to distinguish between the important matters in life and the trivial, and to respond accordingly. Keep me from sarcasm, from self-deprecation, and from the desire to look better than others. Above all, help me to see the joy, the blessings, and the good humor in my life around me. May my life radiate a sense of your joyful presence within me. Amen.